UNDER THE SANCTUARY LAMP

THE CHILD JESUS LOVED

Christmas 1950.

68, Larkfield Gardens,
Rathmines West,
Dublin.

[redacted]

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C. H. Bloch

DURING THE HOLY HOUR

UNDER
THE SANCTUARY LAMP

The Hills That Jesus Loved

REFLECTIONS FOR THE HOLY HOUR

BY THE

REV. JOHN H. O'ROURKE, S. J.

THIRTY-SIXTH THOUSAND

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APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER
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PREFACE

The Holy Hour consists in *an hour* of mental or of vocal prayer, in union with the prayer of the Saviour in the Garden of Olives on Maundy Thursday night.

As a *practice,* it is our Lord Himself who instituted it, determined its end and essential feature: an hour of prayer in union with His Heart in agony in Gethsemani. For St. Margaret Mary tells us in her writings that one day, in 1674, while she was adoring the Blessed Sacrament, the Saviour suddenly appeared to her. His wounds shone like suns, and His Sacred Heart was like a furnace from which dazzling flames shot forth.

After complaining of the ingratitude of men, and recommending the Communion of Reparation, He added: "Every night, between Thursday and Friday, I will make you partake of that sorrow unto death which it was My will to suffer in the Garden of Olives. . . . To join with Me in the humble prayer which I then offered to My Father, you shall rise between eleven o'clock and midnight; you shall prostrate yourself with Me, for *one hour,* with your face to the ground, both to appease the anger of God by imploring mercy for sinners, and to sweeten in some way the bitterness I felt when My Apostles abandoned Me, being unable to watch one hour with Me."

Thus to *repair* the ingratitude of men; to *partake* of the *sadness* of the Heart of Jesus in agony; to *implore* mercy for sinners; to *appease* the anger of God; such is the *end* of the Holy Hour.

In order to spread this devotion among the faithful, and to organize it by association, a *confraternity* was founded in 1829 by Father Debrosse, S. J., in the chapel of the Jesuit Residence at Paray-le-Monial, with the approval of the Ordinary, the Bishop of Autun, and by Brief of Pope Pius VIII. The Centre was afterwards transferred to the Visitation Monastery. In 1886 Leo XIII raised the association to the dignity of an Archconfraternity.

In virtue of a Rescript of Pius IX, in 1875, *all the Associates* of the Apostleship of Prayer, without any special registration, have the right to gain the Plenary Indulgence granted to the members of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Hour, whose Centre is at the monastery of the Visitation in Paray-le-Monial.

By letters Apostolic dated March 30, 1886, the devotion may be practised in *public* or in *private*. If in *public*, that is to say, in common with others, then the Local Directors may name for this exercise, in church or chapel, *any hour* of *any day* of the week they see fit to select. Some choose for this hour the time of their ordinary monthly or weekly public League devotion. If in *private*, then the time is restricted to an hour, between about 2 p. m.

of every Thursday and sunrise on Friday, or, as it is commonly understood, the hour of early Mass on Friday.

The Holy Hour may be spent in prayer of any kind, provided that it is offered in memory of the Sacred Passion, especially of the Prayer and Agony of our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemani. Any *posture* may be adopted, kneeling, standing or sitting. No particular *place* is prescribed, so that even sick persons may practise this devotion. In order, however, to gain the Plenary Indulgence, the invariable conditions of Confession, Communion, and prayer for the Pope's intention are required.

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THE HILL COUNTRY OF JUDEA

I.

I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me. Ps. 120:1.

ZACHARY stood before the golden altar in the Temple. The sun that morning creeping up the eastern sky had bathed with soft light the hills of Hebron. Roof, pinnacles, turrets and spires on Mount Moriah glinted under its new-born brightness. People, Levites and priests, were hurrying to the sacred precincts to be present at the early worshiping. The holocaust had been offered and the lamps in the seven-branched candlestick had been trimmed and lighted, the ashes had been removed from the altar and upon it a fresh fire had been kindled. Sweetly and solemnly the tones of the liturgy were floating through the courts of the Temple with melody inviting all to prayer. Zachary, holding the golden censer from which a fragrant cloud arose, was about to bow down reverently, when "there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. But Zachary seeing him was troubled, and fear fell upon him."

The holy priest was old and feeble. For

years he had ministered before the altar. His eyes were dim, his hair sparse and white. His step had lost the buoyancy of other days, and was tottering now and uncertain. During all these years of faithful service in the Temple, there had been a heavy burden and a keen sorrow on his heart. Elizabeth, his wife, whom he had loved from maidenhood to old age, from the days of her beauty till she was bent with years, was childless. During the journey of their married life this had been their one regret, their one sorrow and disappointment. Faithful and true to every detail of their duty, they had prayed long and fervently and with hope, that God would bless their home with a child and remove the reproach so keenly felt by every Jewish woman. But the music of no childish voice had come to cheer their loneliness, no merry laugh had resounded through the silent rooms of their home in the hill country. No infant son or daughter had been given them to guide with firm hand their tottering footsteps and brighten the evening of their lives. But now when the shadows of the other world were deepening and they thought their life's work over and they were waiting upon the will of God, till the night would come, the yearning of their hearts was granted and their prayer was heard. For now "the angel said to him: 'Fear not, Zachary, for thy prayer is heard: and thy wife, Elizabeth, shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.'" Such were the good tidings from

the angel's lips of the coming of the Forerunner of the Messias, brought to his father at the hour of sacrifice in the Temple.

Nearly six months have worn away since Zachary's heart thrilled with joy at Gabriel's message. The holy priest and his aged spouse kept the secret which God had committed to them and in silence prayerfully wondered at the ways of the Most High. When five months of this holy retirement had passed, the same heavenly messenger was to tell to other ears Zachary's joy and Elizabeth's comfort and happiness. Gabriel is bidden to go, not to the Temple, not to the sanctuary, nor at the time of the sacrifice; there is a holier Tabernacle than the Holy of Holies on Mount Moriah; there is a more sacred sanctuary than that in Jerusalem. "In the sixth month, the Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary." To the inquiry of our Blessed Lady how she could be the mother of the Messias and still be faithful to her vow; how she, a virgin, could conceive and bring forth a son, the angel answered, telling the wonder which the Most High had wrought in favor of her aged cousin, Elizabeth: "'And behold thy cousin, Elizabeth, she also hath conceived in her old age.' . . . And Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste into a city of Juda." This was Heaven's

response to Mary's question, not of hesitating doubt, but of inquiry, so that she should be guided in her willing self-surrender.

Mary's "rising up" was not merely her beginning of the long and wearisome journey from Nazareth over the plain of Esdraelon through Samaria and Judea into the hill country where her cousin dwelt; but it was a spiritual outset into the country of grace to loftier heights of holiness. Because of the wonder told to the Blessed Mother, her mind went deeper into the ways of God, and was lit up with a fuller light concerning the Word made flesh. Her will grew warmer with a love for her Son which had been kindled at the moment of her Immaculate Conception and from day to day had been glowing more and more within her most pure heart. She must hurry to the hill country, for John, the Voice, was there. She could not tarry or linger. In her bosom was the Eternal Word, the Word that had been with the Father from eternity. The Voice and the Word cannot remain apart. They must be united. The Word must reach men's souls through that Voice. Thirty years hence the voice of John will ring out clear along the Jordan, not in sleek formalities and cringing platitudes and truisms of the Synagogue, but with all the clamorous zeal of a union with the Word and a mission to announce that after four thousand years "the Word was made Flesh and dwelt amongst us." What marvel then

that "Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste"?

On out over the plain of Esdraelon sped Mary and Joseph. Sacred memories crowd in upon them as they follow the white, narrow road winding through the green fields of early spring. On this soil which they tread Sisara and his troops were slain. On this very ground the brave Gideon with his loyal three hundred men, strong of arm and stout of heart, swept before them like leaves of autumn the swarming children of the East. Away westward was Carmel, where Elias had dwelt. At its base the great prophet had put to confusion the priests of Baal. Mary was hurrying with the great High Priest of whom the Holy Seer was but a faint and shadowy figure. The great High Priest in the living Tabernacle was now eager to sanctify him who is "to go before" that Child "in the spirit and power of Elias."

It is ever thus with those in whose hearts Jesus Christ reigns. His presence in human souls is never barren, never inactive. It always prompts to deeds of holy zeal. The Son of Man came to kindle fire on earth. The one wish of His Sacred Heart was that it should burst forth into a flame. Thus Mary, now so closely united to her Divine Son, will also yearn to enkindle and scatter that divine fire. Hence her speedy journey to the hill country. What a lesson for us! Visiting friends and relatives is so often a common duty and a

pleasure in our lives. In the fulfilment of this duty, in the enjoyment of this pleasure, do we bring Christ into the lives of others? What graces Mary carried into the lives of Elizabeth and John in the hill country! What blessings do our visits bring into the homes where from time to time we call and tarry? Are those we visit the richer in spiritual gifts and the happier in their homes from our tarrying among them for a time? How often are precious hours frittered away in useless calls? Harm, too, is often done by gossip which, if it regarded ourselves, we should resent most bitterly. How sad that lives which could be brightened by the visit of a friend are often darkened by unkind talk! There are burdens we could make lighter, wounds we could heal, sorrows we could assuage, shadows we could banish, clouds we could dispel, many a bitterness we could sweeten, not a few rough ways we could make smooth, if "rising up" like Mary, we would hasten generously to bring Christ into the lives of others.

To bring Him into other homes, He must first be in the home of our own heart. We must "rise up" from our own littleness, and weakness, and sin, and fly to Him in the hill country of His Tabernacle. Visit Him there often, under the light of the sanctuary lamp. In the presence of His altar, He will light in our souls the fire of His zeal, strengthen the wish to enkindle that sacred flame and spread it in the hearts of others. Then, unde-

terred by difficulties, unimpeded by obstacles, and burning with holy desires, we shall hasten into the farther hill country of other lives and bring by our presence and our words such graces as will make those who see and hear leap with joy and their hearts burn within them.

Here may be recited Psalm 120.

II.

To Thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul. In Thee, O my God, I put my trust; let me not be ashamed. Ps. 24:1, 2.

IT may be at about sunset, as the shadows of the hills are lengthening eastward, that our Blessed Lady reaches the home of Elizabeth. Her journey has been no easy pilgrimage. The distance from Nazareth to the hill country covers some ninety weary miles through Galilee, Samaria and Judea. Over many a hill and through many a valley the Virgin Mother has sped laboriously, her heart rejoicing the while, that she bears her Son to begin His great work in the soul of the unborn Baptist. With loving and tender welcome will the aged mother receive her young Galilean relative. Holy men and women had often entered the home of Zachary. Warm and heartfelt greetings had frequently been whispered on that holy threshold. But no visitor had ever been so acceptable, no reception so kind and so joyous as when Mary came "into the hill country with haste."

Between Zachary and his aged wife there will have been no secrets, in fact there never were such in their long married life. "They were both just before God, walking in all

the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame." This venerable Priest will surely have told his spouse the high destiny of their child, that "he shall go before Him in the spirit of Elias." Hence they know that the weeks of Daniel are about to expire, that the long years of waiting for the Messias are past. If the "Forerunner" is at hand, He who sent him will not tarry long nor delay. When the dawn is breaking over the hills in the east, the full light of day will soon be in the sky. Naturally, they cannot know when the clouds will "rain down the Just One," or when "the earth will open and bud forth a Saviour." They are not aware of the precise time of the coming of the Messias, nor do they know who is destined to be His mother. The knowledge, which is of Heaven and not of earth, will be granted from above. "For Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost and she cried out with a loud voice, and said: 'Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.'"

This greeting sounds like the echoes of Gabriel's message in Galilee. The memory of the angel's visit in Nazareth is renewed by the salutations from Elizabeth at the threshold of her quiet home in the hill country. Mary's lips had never breathed the divine secret and yet her cousin is aware of her motherhood. A strange meeting this between the two mothers! The one is aged and feeble, on the

edge of the tomb and looking into the future with the light of gratitude in her eyes for the answered prayer of long weary years of waiting. She will have high hopes for the child so marvelously given her in her waning days, but neither the imagination of a fond mother, nor the sublime strains of the inspired *Benedictus* can unfold fully the heroism of the Baptist nor the greatness of his mission. The other mother is still in the earlier years of maidenhood. Her long life has yet to be lived and many years must die before she reaches the age of her cousin. Yet she is immeasurably older in grace. The snow-capped summit of the mountain is less above the green field in the lowland valley, than Mary is above her relative in favor with God. To Mary the future of her Son is no dim mystery, no matter of conjecture or uncertain hope. The distant and the near lights and shadows of her Child's life, its sorrows and its joys, its years of repose and obscurity, its years of active work and public toil, are not hidden from her gaze into the future. Were this the case, the consent to become the mother of our Blessed Saviour would be shorn of much of its lustre, heroism and merit. When our Blessed Lady, with bowed head murmured "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," it was no blind impulse eager to obey, but a deliberate act of transcendent merit. This merit was the greater, we may believe, from the fact that the future cares of her Son

stood out in their details before her mind. From the early spring night in Galilee to the dark Good Friday afternoon on Mount Calvary, the Blessed Mother saw and felt the sorrows and joys of her Divine Son.

She had hastened into the hill country to rejoice with her cousin upon the favor found before the Most High in her declining years. No doubt, too, she wished to assist Elizabeth in any need that might at such a time arise. What then will be our Lady's wonder to find that her secret is known—a secret, too, that as yet had not been revealed even to St. Joseph! Her secret had been made known to Elizabeth, not by human tongue, for as yet no human mind knew it, and not in human language, but by the Holy Ghost Himself. For scarcely has Mary reached the threshold of Zachary's home than she is greeted by her holy kinswoman: "Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" At last the promises of God to His people have been kept, the signs verified, the prophecies fulfilled, "and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." This is what Elizabeth in a loud voice proclaimed, both because she "was filled with the Holy Ghost," and because the child in her womb gave evidence of his Maker's presence. "For, behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy."

Our Blessed Lady listens to this outburst

of happiness in silent and prayerful thankfulness and wonder. Hidden in the uncreated bosom of the Father, her Son had wrought that matchless wonder of redeeming grace, His own dear Mother's Immaculate Conception. Now hidden in the bosom of His stainless Mother He hastens to bring about by that same redeeming grace the sinless birth of His Precursor. The Baptist is, by the course of time, six months older than his Saviour, who was begotten before the centuries began, before the angels sprang, swifter than eagle's flight, from the power and the love of the Father. That Infant Saviour cannot endure to see John's soul tainted and tarnished by sin. With hurrying steps His Mother will bear Him into the hill country to cleanse that soul till it be white and more dazzling than the snow that in the evening sun glints on the top of Lebanon. John is in the power of the evil one. God's great enemy has fastened the shackles and chains of a slavery about him, more galling than the serfdom of Israel in Egypt in the early days. He is a foe to Him who has loved him from the everlasting years. So the unborn Babe in Mary's womb will quicken her footsteps over Judea's hills, that He may strike off the chains that fetter His Forerunner; that He may make him free who otherwise would be born a slave; that He may make him a friend who otherwise had entered into the world in the ranks of the enemy. The emanci-

pation of a whole nation of slaves, the freedom of the Israelites from bondage when they crossed the Red Sea free men, is not such an act of mercy, as was the sanctification of the Baptist in his aged mother's breast.

Small wonder, then, that the infant leaped for joy in his mother's womb. He was free and his soul was brilliant with a light not of earth, not of time, but of Heaven and of eternity. He was now the friend of the Bridegroom—as he was to say later—and he would rejoice at His coming. The full use of reason—in others the growth of years—was bestowed upon him and now he could make acts of love and worship such as ascended to the throne of God only from Mary's peerless heart. From the souls of patriarch and prophet and priest had gone acts of adoration; from the lips of Moses on Mount Sinai, of Elias on Mount Carmel, of Melchisedech on Mount Moriah, had gone up prayers to their Creator, but no worship of His Maker had gone out from human lips or hearts save Mary's and her Child's, comparable to that which ascended like sweetest fragrance from John's purified soul unto the throne of God. Why then marvel at the joy of Elizabeth's child?

What joy, too, this mystery must have been to Mary! John was the first convert of the Blessed Mother's Divine Babe. Our Lord had come to cast fire upon earth and now this fire of heavenly love was kindled

in the heart of the Baptist. Later on John would light up in men's hearts this same sacred fire, even in the hearts of Peter, Andrew and the Beloved Disciple. Jesus was to yearn for souls with a far more burning thirst than thirty years hence He yearned for the water at the well in Samaria; and John was to do his share in slaking that burning and constant thirst of the Master's soul. What untold happiness then to our Lady to quicken her steps towards the hill country on this mission of loving zeal! What do we do to appease this craving, this yearning of the Sacred Heart for souls? "Give Me," that Heart sighs, "the souls for whom My hands were pierced, My feet were dug and My side crushed in by the cruel spear." Can we hear that pleading and look at the wounds in the outstretched hands and refuse?

Here may be recited the canticle of Zachary. St. Luke I: 68-79.

III.

Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed! St. Luke 1:48.

THERE is another and a very personal reason for our Lady's joy in her visit to the hill country. Joy is, beyond doubt, the dominant note in the harmony of this mystery. The Blessed Mother will tell us so herself in a moment when she sings that inspired song of all future ages, the *Magnificat*—Mary's hymn, which shall never cloy on human lips or grate on human ears. "And my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour," is her testimony. Immediately she adds the reason of her joy: "Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid." Yes, He had regarded the humility of His handmaid. For He had made her His Mother and now she was to bring Him into the life of St. John.

In the quiet of that spring evening, far from the sacrifices and rites in the temple, far from the throngs which crowded the porches on Mount Moriah, far from the noise and bustle of the mercenary buyers and sellers at the Joppa gate, Mary, in the peaceful valley among the hills of Judea, begins the exercise of her high office of bringing her Son into

the souls of men—an office which none, but we alone, can prevent her from fulfilling. From the hour when Gabriel saluted her, as "full of grace" in the grotto at Nazareth, our Blessed Lady had the claims of a mother over her Child. She could look into the face of her Infant resting in the manger, could see the eyes close in sleep, and watch the heaving of the little breast; if she could lay claim to His obedience in later years, it was because she brought Him into the world and gave Him, who lived from the everlasting years, His life in the world of men.

Through her mediation and His blood, we have become adopted brothers of the Babe of Bethlehem. Just as the natural life came to our Blessed Saviour through Mary, so is she the channel of spiritual life to us, her children. No wonder, then, she rejoiced in God, her Saviour, when the pulses of John's spiritual life throbbed for the first time. He was the first towards whom Mary exercised her privilege and her ministry. There is not wanting in the Church a deep-rooted belief and a widespread teaching, as well as a certain supernatural instinct in the hearts of the faithful, that all graces come to human souls through Mary's means. What a joy to her to begin the exercise of this work of mercy and of love! She is a willing agent, bearing not only grace but the Author of all graces into the hill country, and great is her happiness as with quickening steps she hastens to the home

of her cousin that freedom may be brought to John's fettered soul. We can fancy, too, that as our Blessed Mother looks down the ages, she draws joy and consolation from the thought that ten hundred times ten thousand souls will, by her presence in their lives, cast off the bonds of sin, and from children of darkness and wrath become children of light and love. This is her office towards all of us, and she began its exercise when, at her coming to the home of Elizabeth, "the infant leaped for joy."

It cannot surely surprise us that the Sacred Heart should single out the Baptist as the first to rejoice at His coming and to feel the effect of His presence. John was to go before the Master and announce His coming. He was even greater than Elias, as he was to point out Him whom Elias only foretold. He was to see with eyes of flesh Him whom Elias saw with eyes of prophetic vision. In the desert, on the banks of the Jordan and among the Galilean hills John was to be before Him. He would bear to the Master the testimony of words, the testimony of works, and the testimony of blood. It was John's voice which declared and proclaimed the greatness and the mission of Christ when he said: "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world." Now our Blessed Saviour will go before His Precursor in the world of grace. He will sanctify that Child even in the womb. He will anoint him a

prophet with the unction of Heaven, and consecrate him even before he has looked into his aged mother's eyes, or gazed into the priestly face of Zachary, lit with the light and hope of the other world. The Baptist, in later years, will be the first to bear witness to the power of that grace by preparing and passing on to the Master his own disciples. His voice will ring out in unmistakable tones: "He that shall come after me is preferred before me." Thirty years from now, when Jesus comes forth, thin and emaciated from His long fast in the desert, John will point Him out instantly as "the Lamb of God." Reasonably, then, the anticipated blood-shedding of that Lamb washed the stain of guilt from the soul of John before the friends and kinsfolk of Elizabeth even knew that she was to be a mother.

In days of old when Holofernes had swung his troops into line and pitched his tents upon the hills about Bethulia, and besieged the Israelites within the walls, there was apparently no escape for the people of God from the hands of the enemy. Judith "putting away the garments of her widowhood" went forth in all her beauty and slew the invader of her nation and freed her people. Returning in triumph, she said: "Praise ye the Lord our God, who hath not forsaken them that hope in Him. And by me, His handmaid, He hath fulfilled His mercy that He promised to the house of Israel . . . and He hath killed

the enemy of His people by my hand this night." . . . And Ozias, the prince of the people of Israel said to her: "Blessed art thou, O daughter, by the Lord the most high God, above all women on earth." . . . And the people said: "So be it, so be it." What was the siege of Bethulia, what the imprisonment of the remnant of the people behind its walls, compared to the capitivity of John, enslaved by sin? Mary in all her spiritual beauty goes forth and fulfilling the prophecy made centuries ago in the garden at creation's dawn, crushes the serpent lying in wait for her heel, and strikes the bonds of slavery from the Baptist.

Surely the words of Ozias find echo in the heart of Zachary: "Blessed art thou, O daughter, by the Lord the most high God, above all women upon the earth." Such, too, had been the exclamation of his aged spouse, when she greeted Mary on her doorstep. All the people within the confines of Bethulia, with one voice, sang the praise of Judith, but all generations, and tribes, and peoples shall call Mary blessed. This we have from our Lady's own inspired words: "For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His name." When Judith won the victory over the enemy of her people, Joachim, the high priest, came from Jerusalem unto Bethulia with all his ancients to see the saviour of his country.

"And when she was come out to him, they all blessed her with one voice, saying: 'Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people.'" In the whole Christian world and in the Church of God, there has ever gone up from the hearts and lips of priest and people Mary's praise and Mary's glory. The children of her love and her pain have never ceased and will never cease their hymns and songs in memory of her triumphs and her victories over sin in the hearts of men.

But now our Blessed Mother will speak and break the wonted silence of her lips. Elizabeth had chanted, with deep gratitude, her loving welcome, and John "had leaped for joy" at the sound of Mary's voice. Elizabeth, in her salutation, had struck the keynote of all Mary's greatness: "Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" Here, then, we have the reason of Mary's dignity, the foundation of her wondrous sanctity, the bedrock of the lofty structure of her holiness. St. Paul wishing to explain the grandeur of our Blessed Lord says, He was "made so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels hath He said at any time, 'Thou art My Son'?" We, too, may say of Mary: To which of His angels hath God said at any time: "Thou art My Mother"? This is her dignity, her right, her privilege, and hers alone. Upon

many women in the history of the world have great favors and great honors been bestowed. Men have vied with one another in their efforts to praise and glorify them. Naught that eye could see, tongue ask, or imagination conceive has been denied them. The earth's jewels have been laid at their feet, the sea has given up its corals, and the mountains their precious stones, sparkling crowns have been put upon their brows, and gemmed sceptres in their hands, but there is no gift in the power of man or of God Himself to bestow like that implied in the words of Elizabeth: "Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" Mary's Divine Motherhood is the crown of all her spiritual jewels, the keystone of the arch of all her greatness. To deck our Queen with a brighter gem or higher honor, God would have to make her mother of one greater than Himself, the Infinite, the Eternal.

And now this exalted Mother speaks to us as we kneel adoring her Son. We hear the sweet music of the voice that spoke to Jesus during all His up-growing years; the voice which softly lulled Him to sleep in His sand-cradle, and mingled with the winds which blew over the desert; the voice which whispered to Him during the all too short years in Nazareth; the voice which spoke such words of comfort to Him from the foot of the Cross as He hung bleeding His life away. That voice was sweeter to Jesus' ears than the

chants which angel hierarchies send reechoing from vault to vault of the new Jerusalem. And now we are to hear that voice. What will Mary say after these years of silence? What are the thoughts that have found a home in her mind, which ever pondered upon heavenly truths, and was so familiar with the mysteries of God's kingdom? Seldom has that Blessed Mother spoken, but now she will open her lips in a hymn of praise, the words of which shall never die, but shall go ringing down the ages bringing strength and light and peace to the minds and hearts of Christian people. Generation after generation of the Church's children yet unborn, dwelling upon that hymn in prayer, will rise up stronger, fuller of faith and hope, to bless the Mother who uttered it. Mary speaks and can we wonder that from her lips fall the words: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour; because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed"?

Let us join in her song of praise and offer it to her Son upon our altars, in fulfilment of our long due debt of thanks for all His favors, as a pledge of our more active gratitude in future, as a solace to His Sacred Heart and worthy reparation of Its wrongs.

Here may be recited our Lady's canticle.

THE HILL OF EXPECTATION

With expectation I have waited for the Lord, and He was attentive to me. Ps. 39:1.

IF, as is generally supposed, our Lady's ministry of charity to her cousin in the hill country was prolonged until the birth of the Baptist, it will be early July before Joseph and his holy Spouse are again settled in the quiet of Nazareth. Their journey back to Galilee was full of pleasant memories, for the tarrying with Elizabeth was replete with heavenly consolations. Let us glance at the passing scene for an instant. The rich fields in Samaria are like seas of golden waves under the light breezes which sweep over them, and the long rows of young corn are just beginning to push into stouter and more vigorous life. But of these things Mary will take small thought, rapt as she is in the contemplation of the young life within her bosom.

Of the interval between her return and the cold, bleak winter eve when our Saviour was born, little or nothing is told us in the holy pages. Yet we must guard against imagining for a moment that this is a time of spiritual inactivity. Those periods of Holy Writ are doubtless full of mysteries of which we have no notion. The astronomer looking out upon

the heavens finds at times spaces blank and dark in which no stars shine or planets whirl, spaces like the wild wastes of a trackless desert; yet were his instruments of sufficient power they might reveal to his dull vision myriads of bright worlds far surpassing in beauty those which the keenest eyes and the most powerful telescope can detect. It may be the same in our Blessed Lady's life. Those intervals, about which nothing can be gleaned from the New Testament directly, are filled to overflowing with depths of tenderest love and mysteries so fathomless that even angels' minds can barely skim their surface. Our Lady's soul, we must remember, is always a world apart. We know nothing, then, from Holy Writ of those months of waiting till she could enjoy the earthly vision of the face of the Incarnate God, until with a mother's love she could gaze with melting tenderness into the eyes of her own Child. So dear are these days of watching to the heart of the Church, that she has set a special feast whereon her children may yearly linger over them.

If the aged Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost and the infant in her womb "leaped for joy" at the greeting of her cousin, what must have been Mary's happiness and peace as she bore in her bosom "the Prince of Peace"? What her joy and holy longing as she thought of His birth? The dull, slow business life of obscure Nazareth went on as if nothing wondrous had

occurred within its limits. The caravans of stately camels and swarthly Orientals moved through the town from the sea with their spices and perfumes from the East. The busy crowds left the marts of Nazareth for the more lucrative and active scenes in Damascus; and to none did the thought suggest itself that a greater marvel was daily being enacted than earth had ever yet seen. God had come among His own. He had walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden; He had sent His angels to Abraham in days of old; He had been with Moses on the Mount; but now He has come under another form. All His approaches heretofore had been but types and figures and shadows of His present coming. Now He comes in humility and takes our poor fallen human nature and lifts it up. He takes it and pours out upon it the unction of His Divinity; He consecrates it, divinizes it and makes it His own. He comes very God and very man, and as a Child "tabernacles" for nine months in the womb of Mary His Mother.

Can we wonder, then, that the soul of Mary is filled with a holy expectation as the days and months are running by? And what could she expect who possessed all? What could she desire who had within her breast the "Desired of the Eternal Hills"? What could she want whose Child held up in the hollow of His hand all created worlds? The saints tell us that the beatific vision consists

in the possession of God, and that this vision fills every longing of the soul. How like this was Mary's privilege; and yet she yearns for the bleak slopes of Bethlehem. From the night the angel winged his flight to the grotto chamber in Nazareth and saluted our Lady "Hail, full of grace," till for the first time she looked into the face of her Child, our Blessed Mother possessed in the tabernacle of her bosom the Living Son of God. During all those months, she who was so frail encompassed Him who was omnipotent. She had dominion over Him who controls and guides the destinies of men and nations. What new joy could come into her life, since she felt within her breast Him who was from the eternal years the Second Person of the Adorable Trinity? To what then could she look forward, what expect which was not already hers?

Mary knew that, though her present joy was beyond the telling and that the memory of it would linger with her through all her years, yet it must pass on to another and a greater. Each mystery in our Lord's life though complete in itself was a preparation for the next, and all were leading—whereunto every mystery of the Man-God must lead—to Calvary. Every growth and advance in the knowledge of Mary and her Child will avail little in our spiritual life, unless they lead us step by step up the steep ascent of the way of the cross and make the mystery

of the divine blood-shedding dearer to our hearts. From Nazareth to Bethlehem and thence to Calvary, Mary thirsted for souls and she will thirst till the last soul shall be saved. She loved them on the sands of the desert and out beyond the Nile; she prayed for them during all the quiet years at Nazareth among the Galilean hills; she yearned for them during the three long hours when her Son hung in shame on the cross. So now it was this thirst for souls which made her yearn for the cold Christmas eve on Bethlehem's hill, for she knew that the birth of her Son meant one step nearer to the spiritual birth of the children of her sorrow and her pain. It was her love for souls, then, that made her willing to exchange the joy of being the living tabernacle of the Most High for the hard straw and narrow manger, because the manger was a step closer to the blood-stained wood of the cross. She possesses Him but she longs to give Him to us. He is hers, but she wants Him also to be ours; there is naught of selfishness in a mother's love.

There were other reasons also why Mary would exchange the joys of Nazareth for the hardships of Bethlehem. The Child in her womb was her God and her Son, and with a twofold longing she yearned to look upon His face. We read of the desires of the saints for the beatific vision. How vile, stale and unprofitable the things of this world seemed to them when compared with the sight of

their Creator in the next! St. Paul was rapt to the third Heaven and had seen "visions and revelations of the Lord," and "he was caught up into Paradise and heard sacred words, which it is not granted to man to utter." Was it not this foretaste of the joy in beholding the Master's face which kept so warm in St. Paul's heart the longing expressed in those burning words to the Philippians: "But I am straitened between two: having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better"? Paul had never as a disciple of Christ walked with Him on the hills or over the valleys or by the lakeshore of Galilee. He had never in the body gazed on the face of our Blessed Saviour and looked into His eyes; but the glimpse that was given him when rapt to the third Heaven lit and kindled a fire of desire which ever after glowed in his apostolic soul. And yet, how far inferior to the flame which burned in Mary's breast!

The aged Simeon "had received an answer from the Holy Ghost that he should not see death until he should see the Christ of the Lord." When that answer had been vouchsafed the holy priest we know not. Perhaps it came to him in early years in the Temple when ministering before the altar. Perhaps it was sent in his maturer years when discouragement was threatening to weaken his faith. It may only have come to him late in life when he read deeper into the mysteries of God's dealings with His people. The answer

may have been given to steady his tottering steps as with bent form and the blossoms of many springs upon his head and a look of longing in his eyes, he moved slowly towards the grave. All these years his prayer had been: "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just: let the earth be opened, and bud forth a Saviour." How this promise lit up the darkness of his life of waiting! There must have been in his prayerful eyes a far-off vision of expectancy. He seemed ever peering into the future. There was an attitude of waiting in his manner as of one on the lookout for some promised coming. Who can fathom the depth of the yearning in his soul for the quick approach of the day, when with his now dimming eyes he will look into the face of "Christ the Lord"? Yet what were Simeon's watchings from the heights of Mount Moriah compared with the longing in our Blessed Lady's soul from the inaccessible heights of her incomparable sanctity! Doubtless during the nine months our Lady saw in vision the Incarnate Son who was in her womb. No doubt many secrets with regard to Him and His life among men were revealed to her, but these mystic favors and heavenly interventions would only serve to render her desire to see His face keener and her expectation more intense. The patriarchs of the Old Law sighed for His coming, the prophets foretold it, the kings and people prayed for the advent of the

Messias. His coming was spoken of in the streets and shops, was preached in the Temple; it formed the object of the hopes of the nation for four thousand years. Yet all the hopes and prayers added together and multiplied seventy times seven and put into the soul of God's highest seraph, would not be the slightest shadow of the holy longing, of the vehement yearning which was alive in Mary's soul as she contemplated the birth of the Eternal Son at Bethlehem and desired to look with mortal eye upon the face of the Incarnate God.

This same Incarnate Son in the tabernacle of the virginal womb was not only her God, He was also her Son. So our Blessed Lady hungered for the earthly vision of her Child's face with a mother's love and a mother's fond passionate longing. All mothers, our Lord tells us, naturally desire that moment of joy, when, forgetful of the pains of labor, they only remember that their child is born into the world. Like all earthly mothers, Mary will look forward eagerly to her Son's birth. How deep will be her gratitude and love as she thinks of that Son and the privilege, soon to be hers, of looking into His face! For nine months she has lived a life of closest intimacy with Him; a life of warmer love than centuries of acts from holiest and most exalted cherubim and seraphim. She bore Him with hurrying steps into the hill country and from her womb He sanctified the Baptist; now

she was hastening again over the same road and would soon gaze upon the human countenance of her Child. What an ecstacy of joy in the thought! To look upon the face in whose light the angels knelt and covered their faces in holy fear; to behold the face which was to light up the darkness of Bethlehem's cave; which was perhaps to illumine the camel-trodden road by night in the desert. She was to gaze upon the face down which would come the tears shed over sinful Jerusalem and at the tomb of Lazarus; the face so often raised to the Father in prayer or bowed to gaze with loving pity on Magdalene and Peter and to attract the timid children by the lake.

Would that expectant Mother think of that face in all the coming years? Perhaps she hoped to detect in it some of her own lineaments and features. It was He who had stamped His own likeness on His Mother's soul, and now she returns it in another way. She will know that her Child will be beautiful "above the children of men." She will imagine the face of her Son as He grows in years. She will see it soon at Bethlehem and then with fear in her eyes she will watch it in distant Egypt beyond the Nile. And during all His advancing years she will see and adore it in quiet Nazareth. The changes in the sky at the dawn, or the soft colors in the west at sunset give not the slightest concept of the infinite ever-changing beauty of that sweet face of her growing Boy.

No doubt the shadow of Calvary will fall over the thoughts of the Mother. Calvary is never long absent from the thoughts of those who love her Son. Will she see that face in all the agonies of the Passion, in the Garden, blood-stained and sad from the vision of sin? Will she hear the dull sound of the mailed glove of the servant who strikes that divine countenance? Oh, the horror of the thought to the young Mother's tender heart! She will watch that countenance so calm and gentle and so divine in its meekness as He stands before Pilate and His judges. Perhaps the look of love which will cover the blood-stained face when thirty-three years hence He will meet His Mother on the journey to Calvary, may be granted her. Who can tell? Did she see Him on the cross with head bowed and eyes closing and His face bruised and cut and mud-stained, and yet in the eyes a look of longing and of love? She will hold that Sacred Head on her lap again as she is soon to do at Bethlehem. Then that face will be white and cold with no look of love in the eyes, and there will be tears of blood on her cheeks for she will then be a childless Mother, and the Babe to whose coming she is looking forward now will be dead. To-day, then, is the joy of expectation in her breast; that day there will be darkness in her soul deeper than that which hung over Egypt when God scourged King Pharao. This same sweet face is upon our altars, veiled and hidden, it is true,

but the eye of faith can penetrate the veil. Men turn their backs and will not see, men, too, who believe that their eternal destiny is to gaze upon that countenance and in its light live in joy all the eternal years. Strange contradiction!

Here may be recited Psalm 39.

THE HILL OF BETHLEHEM

Behold I stand at the gate and knock. If any man shall hear My voice and open to Me the door, I will come in to him. APOC. 3:20.

OUR thoughts during this Holy Hour must dwell where the thoughts and affections of tens of thousands of the Church's children love to linger, about the hillside cave of far-off Bethlehem. Jesus so loved that eastern hill, in distant Palestine, that He preferred it to every other spot on this beautiful earth, and chose it as the place of His first home. Neither Rome with all her imperial power, nor Greece with her artistic greatness, nor Jerusalem the capital of His nation, could attract the Infant Heart of Mary's Child, as did the little, unknown town of Bethlehem, the city of David. But Jesus had many homes which He dearly loved, and Bethlehem was not His first dwelling-place. His first abode was in the Father's bosom, which He had loved away back in the everlasting years. There, He is eternally begotten amid the fires of the unbegotten Father's infinite love, long before the hills of Bethlehem were built.

Mary's bosom was His next home. Nine months ago, in the quiet grotto in obscure

Nazareth, while Mary was in prayer, the Angel Gabriel at the Father's bidding winged his flight from Heaven and asked Mary to give a home to Him whose dwelling-place was with the everlasting Godhead. For an instant our Lady could have refused, as the men and women of Bethlehem would refuse nine months later when they sent Him for shelter to the moonlit cave. Strange that it should have been possible for one so encompassed by grace to do aught else but consent; yet she was free, and by that free act the Creator found a home within the bosom of the creature, and the peace of God swept over and rested on that Mother's soul. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

There is another earthly home for which the Heart of Jesus was yearning, the hearts of men. If He came to Mary and made her His tabernacle, if He was born in the city of David, if He labored and died, it was to secure an abode in the souls of men. He has loved us with a love as ceaseless and as restless as the swell of the ocean, and as boundless as the heavens. By this love He yearns to win our hearts so that He and the Father may come to them and take up their abode and dwell in them. He is ever anxious to visit us and tarry in our hearts. He longs to stay with us with a yearning intenser than any that ever filled with passionate fondness the heart of a mother hungering to see her absent child. And yet at times we are more cruel

than the peasants at Bethlehem who had no room for Him in the inn.

Years have flown away and glided into eternity, and perhaps the world has disappointed us; and so during this Holy Hour on the hill of Bethlehem He is asking a home in our hearts. Shall we open them wide and let Him enter in? If we do so, there will be on earth no joy like ours, and His presence will be more than a match for any sorrow. The peace, too, of which the angels sang on Christmas night above Bethlehem's hills, will possess our souls.

There is another, or rather there are ten thousand other earthly dwelling-places where He ever loves to tarry—the Catholic altars in every clime and among every people. These altars are dear to Him because of His abiding Presence among the children of men and because of the clean oblation which is offered to His Name in every land, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. Of the tabernacle of the Old Law, where He dwelt in sign and figure only, it is said: "I will sanctify also the Tabernacle of the Testimony with the altar. And I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who have brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might abide among them." If this is true of the figure, what are we to think of the reality? Of our tabernacles we can in truth say: "Behold the

Tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them. And they shall be His people; and God Himself with them shall be their God." How the angels gazing at their Master on the altar must marvel at our coldness! Will not our firm belief that the Babe of Bethlehem is there, just as truly as He was in Mary's arms that first Christmas eve, make our love glow on His coming birthday? Would we, had we been in David's city that first Christmas eve, have sent Him to the cold, bleak hillside to be born?

Now at last there is that well-loved cave on the Judean ridge where He first pitched His Tabernacle among men. Early on the afternoon of the first Christmas eve, Mary and Joseph leave Jerusalem and turning their faces to the south take the old road stretching on towards Hebron, whose mountains are visible in the distance. They are tired now, and footsore and weary. Their journey has been from their northern home among the mountains of Zabulon along the wintry road. Yet their hearts must be filled with a holy longing. The Holy Souls yearn with all the energy of their being for the vision of the Face of God: how much more ardent must have been Mary's longing to see the face of her Child? Was it not a desire for the beatific vision? In her pure heart must have been ringing the words of the Psalmist: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God: my soul

hath thirsted after the strong, living God. when shall I come and appear before the face of God?" With a twofold eagerness is Mary eager to see her Child: with the yearning of the creature for the Creator; with the natural desire of a mother's heart for the vision of the face of her first-born.

Will Mary and Joseph remember as they cross the plain of Rephaim, two miles south of Jerusalem, that David, the type of her Son, there defeated the Philistines? Now in her bosom she bears Him who will lead soldiers on to braver battles and more glorious victories than were ever fought and won on Rephaim's fields. Still further towards David's city is Rachel's tomb. "So Rachel died and was buried in the highway, that leadeth to Ephrata: this is Bethlehem. And Jacob erected a pillar over her sepulchre: that is the pillar of Rachel's monument to this day." Rachel died in sight of Bethlehem bringing forth her child in pain. Mary painlessly brought forth her Child but He will die in pain, that we, who ought to die, may live in joy forever. Daily, too, at break of dawn will He die a mystic death, that we may "have life and have it more abundantly," and not taste death forever.

Slowly they move forward to the end of their journey. Bethlehem is perched on the narrow ridge of the hill up whose side climb the vineyards and the olive orchards. They can see the fields in which, centuries ago, Ruth

gleaned the corn. They pass by the well for whose crystal water David thirsted. They can see the sheep browsing on the same slopes where David, as a shepherd lad, drove them down to pasture. Beyond the ridge to the west is the valley of Elah, where the young shepherd lad, not yet a soldier in Saul's army, slew the giant Goliath and gained his early victory. But Mary on this cold, bleak evening may have taken little thought of such incidents, so rapt is her spirit in communion with her Child.

At length the town is reached, and the holy couple, climbing the steep hill, ask for lodging. One week at least, and perhaps more, have they been on that wearisome journey, which now at last is over. For nine months has she been yearning to see her Child. That Child, too, has been journeying from eternity and longing all the endless years to look upon His Mother's face with human eyes.

Surely now, after four thousand years of waiting and watching, the King will be welcome. His coming which had been promised in the garden, sung by the prophets, and definitely foretold by Daniel, will be a joy to Israel. At last the seasons of type and figures have died away and the reality has come. Doubtless Bethlehem's hill will re-echo with the song: "Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad before the face of the Lord, for behold, He cometh." But no such song went up from the lips of the children of Israel that first Christmas night. "There was

no room for them in the inn." There was room for the Roman soldiers who strutted through the eastern village; there was a welcome for the guests from Jerusalem; there was room for priest and scribe, and pharisee; there was room for all who asked for shelter; but "there was no room for *them* in the inn." The doors were shut in their faces and they were sent out to the water-dug, chalk cave in the hillside. Truly had Isaias spoken; "The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib: but Israel hath not known Me; and My people hath not understood." How true the words from the Book of Kings! "But the children of Belial said: Shall this fellow be able to save us? And they despised Him and brought Him no presents, but He dissembled as though He heard them not."

The evening is growing colder and the winds more chilly, and the steel gray of the sky is early darkening as that bleak December day is closing in. Mary draws her thin mantle more closely about her, while Joseph asks for shelter. The answer was prompt: "There was no room for them in the inn." The wind was cold as it pierced Mary's thin cloak, but it was not as cold as the refusal of a lodging for the Mother's Child.

It is well that thus early the doors should be shut in His face. Soon He will be hunted by Herod into Egypt, and later on His countrymen will cast Him out and try to stone Him to death. He will be rejected by the

men of Galilee, abandoned by His Apostles, betrayed by Judas, hooted by the populace, and put to death by the nation. Now, too, the same rejection is going on every day in thousands of human hearts. Men will not give Him shelter; they send Him out to the cold and heartless hillside of the world. Our hearts, like the inns of the city of David, are crowded with other interests than those of the Babe of Bethlehem. There is room in them for dangerous pleasures, worldly aims, doubtful friends, fashionable companions, distracting and useless occupations, but when Mary's Child knocks gently for entrance, the door is not opened at all and even at times is slammed in His face. No room for the Babe of Bethlehem in our hearts! Love of comfort, love of ease, love of dress, love of money, love of the world, can make our hearts colder to Mary's Child than was the chilly cave on Christmas night.

Two things the world will refuse no man: a shelter for his birth, a roof for his death. These two things were refused to our Blessed Saviour. He came into the world under the rocky shelter of a cavity in the hillside, almost against the will of the denizens of an insignificant eastern village, and He died in shame upon the cross under the darkened canopy of heaven. Yet He yearns more for a welcome in the human heart than He did for shelter on His birthday or on Good Friday. How warm is our welcome to Mary's Child when

He is born in our hearts in Holy Communion, and what comfort do we give Him, when He dies on our altars at the dawn? Do the cold currents of worldliness or self-seeking, or pride chill Him at His birth in our souls, or wound His Heart in His death?

The night is waning on Judea's hills. The stars look down in wonder, and the sheep, fattening for the Temple sacrifice, are browsing on the slopes and watched by the simple shepherds, as David tended the sheep on these same heights. Perhaps the simple shepherds try to see through the darkness as they hear Mary and Joseph passing on to the stable beyond. Over the valley on an eminence is Herod's marble palace, girded round about by the magnificent mansions of his courtiers and admirers. In the palace that night there is feasting and quaffing of rich red wine. The sound of music floats out through the open windows of the heated halls. Peals of merry laughter ring loudly over the valley. Mary and Joseph scarcely notice the brilliantly lighted rooms; they hardly hear the sounds of worldly merriment. Their thoughts are fixed upon Him who is the joy of the angels, and the sound of the world's music cannot enter the sanctuary of their hearts.

Out to the cave they make their way. How the Child in His Mother's bosom must love that hill! It affords Him a shelter and a home when the city of David has rejected Him and sent Him into the cold, bleak stable to be

born. Into the darkness Mary enters; Joseph turns and sees with wonder the bright light flashing in the sky, and suddenly a heavenly music which drowns the minstrelsy from Herod's banquet-halls floats from above the hills: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will" is chanted by "a multitude of the heavenly army." Joseph knows now that when "the night was in the midst of her course, Thy Almighty Word, O Lord, came down from Heaven from Thy royal throne. The Lord hath reigned, He is clothed with beauty, the Lord is clothed with strength and hath girded Himself." He sees the light in the sky and remembers full well what Isaias said: "A light shall shine upon us this day; for our Lord is born to us; and He shall be called Wonderful, God the Prince of peace, the Father of the world to come; of whose reign there shall be no end." He realizes that "a Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us; and the government is upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called the Angel of Great Counsel." A mysterious light from the manger fills the place with a brilliancy of heaven, and there upon the yellow straw Joseph beholds the Eternal Son of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in human form, for "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." In the morning it was registered in the civil records of Bethlehem that a child was born during the night of poor homeless parents,

who had come up from Nazareth to be enrolled in the Census. The priests will still count the weeks foretold by the angel to Daniel; the scribe and pharisee will continue to look forward to the advent of a leader to deliver their nation from the power of Rome; the people will peer into the distance in expectation of a temporal king to wield again Juda's sceptre and wear Israel's crown, but the weeks of Daniel have run out, the leader has come and the King is on His throne and they know it not. "He came into the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own and His own received Him not."

Here may be recited Psalm 23.

THE HILL OF THE SHEPHERDS

Glory to God in the highest; and on earth, peace to men of good-will. ST. LUKE 2:14.

"WHILE all things were in quiet silence and the night was in the midst of her course, Thy Almighty Word, O Lord, came down from heaven from Thy royal throne." At the same time out on the hill slope covered with frost as thin and white as a bridal-veil and under the bright stars "there were in the same country shepherds watching and keeping night watches over their flocks. And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them; and the brightness of God shone round about them." How familiar the picture! The simple shepherds have interwoven themselves with our sweet memories of Bethlehem, as the threads in the cloth of their homespun garments. All Christian art has placed them near the manger on the frost-nipped hill that Jesus loved, and all Christian devotion has put them near the Babe in every Catholic heart.

It was an angel's voice that announced the glad tidings on the first Christmas night, just as nine months before it was Gabriel who winged his flight from God's throne, with the message that the Word was to be made flesh. Up amid the hills of Nazareth, at the sound

of the angel's voice, Mary receives into the living tabernacle of her bosom the Eternal Son of God. How dear to Him that tabernacle! Far dearer it was in His eyes than the tabernacle built at Heaven's command by Solomon on Mount Moriah, far more precious than tabernacles of gems and glittering stones in our richest cathedrals. When Mary received the Eternal Word in her bosom, angelic harmonies swept the vaults of the new Jerusalem. Now when that same Mother places her Babe in the manger-tabernacle the hills and valleys about the earthly Jerusalem resound with heavenly songs and minstrelsy.

It is fitting that angels should chant over Bethlehem on His birthnight. Such seems to have been the Father's command. For St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews says: "When He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith, 'and let all the angels of God adore Him.'" Back in the dawn of their creation, we are told, God had shown the angelic world, in vision, the Sacred Humanity of His Son. Perhaps they saw the Babe of Bethlehem shivering on a wisp of straw in the manger, as the cold wind blew over Judea's hills in through the chinks of the stable. In their pride one-third of the angelic hierarchy rose in rebellion and cried: "We will not serve." On Christmas night, now that the vision is fulfilled, the tried and faithful multitudes of celestial spirits, "which no man can number," speed forth from their

thrones to do reverence in triumphant song and jubilee to the Babe of Bethlehem. In the courts of the Temple, when the victim was prepared for the sacrifice and laid on the altar, the sweetest music burst forth from the silver trumpets of the priests; now near David's City, when He who is true Priest and Victim is prepared for the real sacrifice and is laid in the manger, the heavenly music flows forth from angels' voices in notes of joy and triumph.

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will." Once before in human history had mortal ear heard angels' songs. Once before had celestial harmony sped over earthly hills and valleys. Away back in the day of Isaias, immediately before the saintly prophet told King Achaz "that a virgin should conceive and bear a Son and His name should be called Emmanuel," the holy seer heard the angels' song in the temple of God: "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is full of Thy glory." Then the music was in heaven's courts in anticipation of the coming of the King in ages far distant; now it is chanted over the straw-thatched stable-shed in honor of Israel's King who has come. Formerly it was a song of anticipation of His birth, now it is chanted because the King is born. How full our joy should be when the same Babe of Bethlehem is born daily in the chalice on our altars, and with what jubilee our hearts should thrill when

in Holy Communion, Mary's Child comes for a fuller birth into our souls!

In the stable, Mary and Joseph are in prayer and in an ecstacy of wonder and of love. They have seen the face of God and lived. It is true to say they have enjoyed, in a certain sense, the beatific vision, for they have looked upon the countenance of their Creator. Round about the Child, who is Uncreated Holiness, are His two most loved souls in Heaven or on earth: the one His Mother, in whose womb for nine months He has dwelt and who in grace and dignity has no parallel; the other, Joseph, in sanctity below his spouse, the foster-father of the Babe in the manger and over whom in some mysterious way the Eternal Father has thrown the shadow of His uncommunicable Paternity.

The heavenly choir has ceased; the bright light has faded out of the skies and the dawn is coming timidly over the hills of Moab, as if afraid and in reverence before the light which shines from the face of the Child. Mary raises her eyes and sees the first adorers of her Son.

"After the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another: 'Let us go over to Bethlehem . . .' and they came with haste." There was no need to tell Mary who the visitors were. Their weather-beaten features, their rough clothing, their dark faces told their calling. Then, too, the Mother knew it was proper that the shep-

herds should be among His first worshippers. Was not the Babe in the manger to be a shepherd, not, it is true, of sheep fattened on Judea's hills for the Temple sacrifice, but a shepherd of souls redeemed later on by the blood now reddening His infant lips and cheeks? The Child now in His Mother's arms will, thirty years hence, cry out in the streets of Jerusalem and from the porches of the holy Temple: "I am the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep." It was to feed the starving sheep and lead them back into the one true fold that He would grow to manhood and walk through the streets of Sion and on the bosom of the mountain and by the edge of the lake. To feed the sheep, He will die and leave His Body and His Blood that they may eat and live. Can we wonder, then, that with hastening steps the shepherds came to kneel at His feet? How welcome these poor, simple men are at the dawn of this first Christmas day! They are men who have led lives of toil. Their garments are coarse, their hands hard, their faces roughened by the biting winds which blow over the hills of Bethlehem. Their nights were long and weary as they watched their flocks and fulfilled their appointed duty. They had little of this world's goods and still less of its pleasures. These were reserved for the revellers in Herod's palace on the slope opposite the stable-cave. But they have what is better and dearer, the Heart of the Babe

of Bethlehem. They are simple men and true, faithful to the light given them and living in fidelity to the traditions of the Law. And now these are called to be the first adorers of the new-born Child.

So, too, the same Child of Mary is in His Tabernacle, and His love and care go out to all of us. In our fatigue if we go to Him there we shall be refreshed as the shepherds were. In our toil and poverty we shall be, oh! so rich, if we only kneel before the Tabernacle and receive into our hearts the riches of the Father, His only begotten Son. Then we shall be rich indeed, and go away so content, yet not content to go away.

Shall we not join the shepherds? When He comes into our hearts in Holy Communion we must not hear the sound of the earthly music, which is streaming from the open windows of Herod's palace, but in our hearts will be ringing, as in the shepherds' ears, the anthem of the angels: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."

It is hard to leave the feet of the Child and His Blessed Mother and her holy Spouse. Would that we could linger with them always! Yet we must go. It is sad to think that on the first Christmas night our Blessed Saviour came to Bethlehem and asked in vain for lodging, shelter and a place in which to be born. The doors were closed in His Mother's face, and on His birthday He was sent out

to the cold hillside. There was no room for Him in the inn. During the rest of His life, though He wandered as a Child along the yellow Nile, though He toiled to manhood in obscure Nazareth, and was often in the Temple for the Passover, yet He seems to have come back never again to David's city, where He was born. Many a time and oft He walked through the streets of Jerusalem and beyond the Jordan; frequently His sacred feet trod the hills and valleys of Galilee; time and again He was found on the white sands of Genesareth, and He sailed on its bosom in calm and storm; but nowhere do we read in Holy Writ that He ever trod the streets of Bethlehem. He came there on the first Christmas night and asked for a place to be born. The request which is refused to no other was denied Him. And He went out from the city of David never to enter it again. What a dreary life ours would be if He came some Christmas and asked to be born in our hearts, and we closed the doors of our souls in His face! How sad that Christmas day for the soul out of whose life the Babe of Bethlehem has gone never to return! But those who love to linger near the Tabernacle under the light of the sanctuary lamp are not such as will refuse to the Babe of Bethlehem the gift which He prizes most, their hearts; and they are not likely to forget that the best Christmas giving is Christian living.

Here may be recited Psalm 71.

THE HILLS OF EGYPT

Behold the Lord will ascend upon a swift cloud, and will enter into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst thereof.
Is. 19:1.

I.

THE swarthy Oriental kings have come to Bethlehem and gone. The sound of the jingling bells on the stately camels has long since died away in the streets of David's city. The stir and excitement caused by the advent and departure of the royal visitors has ceased. Their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh had been laid at the feet of the new-born Babe, who, in His Mother's arms, had welcomed the weary travelers after their long journey.

The fortieth day after the angels had chanted their undying hymn of triumph over Bethlehem's hills, found Mary, Joseph and the Child in the Temple. Simeon, whose form was bent with the weight of years and whose eyes were dim from watching into the future, holds in his feeble and trembling arms Him who bears myriad worlds in the hollow of His hand. Anna, whose home was the Temple, had looked

out eagerly as if from a watch-tower, for the coming of the Child to Mount Moriah. And she, too, had been rewarded by the vision of the face of Jesus, and that sight had been a recompense beyond the telling for all the patient longing during the slowly dying years of her watching.

Back now to Bethlehem the Holy Family have once more found their way over the same road which Mary and Joseph trod so wearily the first Christmas eve. Perhaps they may have had some thought of settling permanently in the little town—the city of their tribe. The quiet, peaceful days, so full of untold joy and consolation, were not to last long. The soul's strength, like that of a strong-built vessel, is better shown in storm than in a calm sea. The soldier's courage is more readily evidenced on the field of battle, than in the time of peace. One night as Joseph lay asleep, like an officer at the door of his Prince's tent on the alert for the first sign of danger, "an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: 'Arise and take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt.'" A "hard saying" this. Why retreat, why have recourse to flight? Was not the Babe the Eternal Son? Ten legions of angels with drawn swords stood eager for His defence. Not so did Joseph reason. Of him Holy Writ adds: "Who rising up took the Child and His Mother by night and retired into Egypt." In centuries to come the land of Egypt both in city and desert will

teem with religious life, which perhaps had never been lived if Mary's Child had not sanctified that soil so fruitful later on in saints. Joseph, however, could not peer into the future, nor did he need to do so. For him it was enough that God had spoken and he was sure that He who fed the swallows of the air and clothed the lilies of the field, would watch over His own Beloved Son.

Centuries ago word had come to Abram on the plains of Haran: "Go out of thy country and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's' house, and come into the land which I shall show thee." The saintly patriarch obeyed, and the promise, "I will make of thee a great nation" was fulfilled. When Moses was feeding the sheep of Jethro, God called him from Madian and said: "I will send thee to Pharao, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt." Moses followed the call and finally led the people of God into the Land of Promise. Paul breathing fire and vengeance was unhorsed outside the walls of Damascus and bidden by Ananias to cast in his lot with the despised Christian sect. He obeyed and became a vessel of election to carry the name of Christ "before the Gentiles, and Kings and before the children of Israel." Matthew on the lake-shore of Galilee was startled by the Master's invitation: "Follow Me." In obedience to that voice he left the glittering gold and silver. As his reward he taught untold numbers to lay up

"treasures in heaven: where neither the rust nor the moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through and steal." So Joseph, at the bidding of the angel, without tarrying or questioning, "took the Child and His Mother by night and retired into Egypt." The Babe of Bethlehem, a fugitive from the wrath of an earthly king, passes over the desert in His Mother's arms and lingers on the shore of the Nile under the shadow of the pyramids, a few short years. By His sojourn in that country He blessed it and made it fruitful. And in after years, as a result of that time of exile, no fairer flowers have bloomed in the garden of the Church, than in the cities and in the desert wilds of Egypt.

Before following the Holy Family down through the hill country of Judea and over Hebron on out into the desert, we can pause awhile and ponder on the lesson already hinted at in this beautiful mystery. No call of God ever found in holiest seraph such prompt obedience as Joseph gave that night to the angel's voice in Bethlehem.

As at times we kneel under the light of the sanctuary lamp, do we not hear the voice of Mary's Child calling to us in various ways? Sometimes He bids us fly from some danger, from some occasion of sin. He is in our hearts and He entreats us to take Him away from an enemy more cruel than the wicked Herod who sought His life among the hills of Judea. Often with outstretched hands the fugitive

Babe of Bethlehem begs us to take Him in our arms by nobler lives of purer motives, higher aims, braver deeds. And we look at the difficulties and perhaps refuse. Joseph did not look out into darkness and weigh the obstacles in his path and tarry till the dawn.

Again how often before the Tabernacle have we not heard in our souls the command given to Abram: "Go out of thy country and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall show thee"? To many hearts these words are spoken, into many lives this blessed invitation comes. He pleads with them so piteously; He promises them a hundredfold in this life and eternal joy in the next. He yearns to be taken by their efforts away from persecutors fiercer than Jerusalem's blood-stained king and brought into an Egypt of ten thousand hearts and souls; but those who receive the call, hestitate, find excuses and finally heed not. How many lives, which in the cloister would have blossomed into fairest flower and richer fruit and been productive of untold good, have in the world faded, shrivelled up and died with nothing done for souls or Him who bled His life away for men! How many who, if they had generously asked like Paul, blind outside Damascus' gate: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?" and had been strong of arm and stout of heart to do His will, would have lived near the altar and within the shadow of the sanctuary! Their lives, like

Paul's, would have rung true to every noble motive and have influenced for good ten thousand souls. Such lives outside of their calling, away from the Tabernacle, have been cold and dark, scanty in merit for themselves and all but useless for others.

One day during our Lord's public ministry, when He came into the coasts of Judea beyond the Jordan and the multitudes flocked to Him, a certain young man running up and kneeling before Him, asked Him: "Good Master, what shall I do that I may receive eternal life?" When the young man had answered our Lord's heart-searching questions on the commandments with the sublimely simple words: "All these things I have observed from my youth," Jesus, looking on him, loved him and gave him the call to the higher life. "Come, and follow Me," were the words that conveyed the invitation. Who that had seen the look in the Master's eyes, had heard the sweet persuasiveness of His voice, had witnessed the pleading of His hands could have refused? Yet St. Mark tells us that the young man who had kept the commandments from his youth did refuse, for he says: "Who being struck sad at this saying went away sorrowful." But who can tell the sorrow that weighed down the Sacred Heart? For "Jesus looking on him loved him." It is sad to think how often similar scenes are enacted in Catholic homes, how those whom Jesus calls will not heed. The command comes to flee with the

Babe of Bethlehem. They loiter and tarry. The days of their sad lives slip away. The Child has been taken into the Egypt of other souls by braver and stouter hearts. There He will render lives fruitful of holiness as did His sojourn along the Nile centuries ago.

Out from the same Tabernacle comes the same voice of our Blessed Saviour pleading with parents; the Sacred Heart asking for His own, which He has entrusted to them, not given. How often are obstacles set in the way of a higher life by the example, by the unwillingness of the parents themselves! Frequently the pleading of the Sacred Heart is either unheeded or unheard. Natural affection, hopes of worldly prosperity, imaginary needs dull and blunt the perceptions of the soul and the voice of the Master which was heard above the wild rush of the storm and waves on the Sea of Galilee, is not perceived. What a risk such parents run lest one day God scourge them for their selfish disobedience! When Moses was sent to Pharao and bade him let the Hebrews free from slavery, the king refused and God struck Egypt. "And the Lord hardened Pharao's heart, neither did he let the children of Israel go. And the Lord said to Moses: 'Stretch out thy hand toward heaven, and may there be darkness in the land of Egypt, so thick that it may be felt.'" Not only was there darkness in the land of Egypt because Pharao would not let the people go, but there was blood. "And every

first born in the land of the Egyptians shall die, from the first born of Pharao who sitteth upon his throne, even to the first born of the hand-maid that is at the mill, and all the first born of the beasts." It is not unknown that God has called and parents would not let the children go. For this disobedience such homes have been scourged. Firesides have been chilled and darkened, lives broken and shattered, and tears of blood shed. Parents, like Pharao, have hardened their hearts, and young lives full of promise have been blighted with a blight more wasteful than that which swept over the land of Egypt at the command of Moses. Young hearts once noble in their aims, lofty in their purposes, and eager for things of God, have wilted and shrunk up and sunk to things low and degrading. Parents have lived to see the day and to regret that when God called they hardened their hearts. In bitterness and anguish of spirit they could say with Jeremias: "How is the gold become tarnished, the finest color is changed, the stones of the Sanctuary are scattered in the top of every street." This is our first lesson which we must take deeply to heart as we kneel during our Holy Hour and hear the angel in the night bid Joseph: "Arise and take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt."

Here may be recited Psalm 107.

II.

THE lights had gone out one by one in the cottages on Bethlehem's hills. The cold winter wind was blowing over the ridge, but it was not half so chilling as the fear that hung over the souls of Mary and Joseph. Out into the darkness they steal hurriedly, silently, fugitives from their native land, exiles from the city of their tribe. The holy couple on the first chill Christmas eve had timidly asked for shelter, for a roof under which their Child could be born. But the doors had been closed in their faces and they were welcomed by the dumb animals in the cave. Now from even this poor lodging the cruelty of those He loves is forcing Him out into exile in Egypt.

Perhaps the innocent Babe of Bethlehem thinks of the day, over thirty years later, when He shall be banished from Nazareth, the home of all his growing years. "And all they in the synagogue hearing these things were filled with anger. And they rose up and thrust Him out of the city." Or that other scene may come before His mind, when preaching in the porches of the Temple "Jesus said to them: Amen, amen, I say to you before Abraham was made, I am.' They took up stones therefore to cast at Him, and He went out from the

Temple." Even now that Child must flee from the jealousy of Herod who fears He may one day be King. And years later it will come to pass, that if He fly not along the shore of the Sea of Galilee up to the steep cliffs, the people for whom He has multiplied the loaves will make Him King. But He does not want the crown on Herod's head. His is to be a blood-dyed crown of thorns.

Perhaps it was well that Mary's Child should early become accustomed to being chased from the haunts of men. For the time was to come when they would clamor for His blood and hound Him to death. Men, too, now banish Him from their hearts, hearts in which He once dwelt and rested, as He is now reposing in His Mother's arms. Poor human hearts! How sad and heavy they will be when they realize that they have cast out the Babe of Bethlehem!

On through the night they hasten. Mary draws Him closer to her bosom; for the wind which sweeps down the valley of Elah is biting cold. The Child stirs and moves in her arms, not perhaps from discomfort, but He recollects that up that valley David fought Goliath and gained his earliest honors. And now One greater than David is hurrying from His enemy into a foreign land.

When the day is breaking in the eastern sky, before them higher up in the hill country through which they are passing, they can see glinting in the morning light the roofs, towers

and turrets of Hebron redolent with ten thousand memories of the Old Dispensation. Here they rest a while. For after their rapid night journey, and with fear still heavy on their hearts, they are tired and weak and need repose and refreshment. Strange thoughts must cross their minds, if they ever think of aught else but of the Child and of His safety. Here Abraham entertained the angels who foretold that Sara in her old age should give birth to Isaac. Now the true Isaac is come to the valley of Mambre, and one greater than Abraham and all the angelic hosts, holds Him in her arms and lovingly provides for the wants of Him who is infinitely rich.

Amid these hills the holy patriarchs found a home. Their bones and ashes are at rest and undisturbed in the cave of Machpelah hard by. But here is no home for Him for whose coming the patriarchs sighed and prayed. Many a weary mile lies between that saintly family and a quiet place of rest beyond the Nile. When Joseph, the type of the Joseph who now bears Jesus in his arms, was prince over Egypt, he invited his father, Jacob, to come from Hebron to the land of Goshen and there dwell in peace and plenty. Now another Joseph greater than any prince of Egypt, for he rules Him who rules over land and sea, is forced to hurry into Egypt to save the life of Him who is life eternal and who can never die.

Brief, however, will be their tarrying in

Hebron. For though tired and footsore, anxious in mind and weary in body they push on still through the hill country over rough roads to Bersabee, the border-town of the desert and the last halting place before plunging out into the wilderness. By the wells they can linger with a feeling of greater safety though they are not yet out of the danger of pursuit. Centuries ago when the Patriarchs dwelt here in tents, they drove their flocks from the sloping fields to those same wells, to drink. From his home among these hills Abraham, at God's command, went up to Jerusalem with his son, Isaac, to offer him as a burnt offering. "Take thy only begotten son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go into the land of vision; and there thou shalt offer him for an holocaust upon one of the mountains which I shall show thee." Mary knows that from all eternity the decree has gone forth for the slaying of her Son, the true Isaac, and on the day of the holocaust no angel's hand will stay the bloody knife. No hand will stop the onrushing of the spear which will go crashing through His sacred side in search of the last drop of His blood. She knows it all and draws her Babe more closely to her bosom, and offers Him up on the altar of her heart with ten thousand times more love than Abraham offered Isaac from the altar of wood on Mount Moriah.

But they cannot linger long in the cool shade at the wells of Bersabee and soon they are on

their way along the caravan road through the desert. Let us join them in their journey and gazing into their sweet faces learn to love them more.

Looking back when they have trudged over the road for many a weary mile, their hearts will rejoice to see the fringe of the hills of Palestine growing more indistinct, and they will thus feel safer from pursuit. To the north the wide ocean of sand seems to slope away in furrows towards the dunes, which like sentinels appear to frown upon the inrolling waves of the Mediterranean. On the other three sides the wilderness is hedged in by circling mountains, back of which stand Sinai and Horeb. Upon what sacred ground they are walking and what marvels the power of that helpless Child wrought for forty years on this very wilderness and through these very mountains! Through these sandy plains God led the chosen people and went before them in a cloud of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night. Through all the years, as they wandered over these wild stretches of country without guide in the midst of enemies, God fed His chosen people with the manna which daily at the dawn was on the ground outside their tents. But now when His only begotten Son is driven forth in the arms of His Mother, there is no pillar of fire to lead them during the night, no cloud of smoke to guide them during the day and hang over the true Holy of Holies and protect Him from the sun's

burning heat. No bread from heaven is rained down daily for His nourishment, who later on will say on the lake-shore: "Your fathers did eat manna in the desert and are dead. . . . He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life." This difference, implying our Blessed Saviour's choice of suffering for Himself and His closest friends, will only make Mary's and Joseph's hearts grow warmer in their love for the helpless Child. These and other wonders which God wrought in other days among His people will not be absent from their thoughts.

One evening they halt at a well in the shade of a cluster of welcome palm-trees. The day has been intensely hot. Mary and Joseph are tired and weary. As they sit at the cool spring Mary can see the shadows of the palms lengthening towards the east as the sun hurries to his setting. Those shadows will intensify that thought, which is never absent from her mind, that the shadow of the ineffable paternity of the Eternal Father clothes and envelopes her spouse. And thus she will grow deeper in reverence and love for the Heavenly Father's visible representative.

Mary is now cooling and bathing the sweet face of her Child. That face is the delight of the angelic hosts who hover round in adoration, more numerous than the sands that sparkle under the slanting rays of the departing sun. Yet one day that face will be marked by the rude hand of the chief priest's servant

and covered with mud and spittle. Mary will bathe that face then, too, but there will be no smile in those eyes and no look of gratitude, for she will be a childless Mother at the foot of the cross. Poor suffering Mother! There are tears in her eyes. She cannot keep back the thought of the Passion. That shadow of Calvary is lengthening over her soul with the growth of years, as the shadows of the palm-trees are lengthening over the caravan road. She feels the little arms and hands about her neck and she knows the day will come when those hands, which shall have rested in blessings on the heads of little children, which shall have touched miraculously the eyes of the blind, those tiny hands will be dug by the cruel nails and will run blood.

But the wind is blowing cold over the sandy billows, so Mary wraps Him in His little blanket and lays Him to rest. Does she think of that dark Good Friday when she and Magdalene with loving hands will wrap the winding sheet about Him and lay Him in the tomb? And now the eyes close, the features relax and the Babe of Bethlehem sleeps. Yet all the while, even from eternity He has been watchful. Even now He is ruling countless worlds, guiding the planets with the touch of His power, watching the destinies of men and directing them by His providence with more than a mother's love. The same Child is hidden on our altars and at times we are tempted to think Him unmindful of us and

our needs. How ungrateful of us to doubt Him! There is no least detail, no slightest circumstance of our lives that is not a matter of loving concern to our hidden Master. Mary did not watch and guard her sleeping Child with half the affection and tenderness with which that Child from the Tabernacle guards and protects us. "O ye of little faith, why do you doubt?"

On then for days they continue their journey till they come to the Red Sea. No doubt the memory of the hymn of triumph which their forefathers sang on the shore after their escape from Egypt, will find a grateful echo in their hearts now that they are safe from the pursuit of the cruel Herod. They would naturally follow along the coast of the Gulf of Suez and rounding pass over into Egypt and on to Heliopolis. There is a pious belief that when the Holy Family entered "the city of the Sun" the idols in the temple fell to the ground to show reverence to the true Sun who is "the Light of the World." This may be true, but we have no proof. We know from Holy Writ that the idol Dagon fell to the ground when placed in the same temple with the Ark of the Covenant and this may have given rise to the other belief. What is certain beyond question is that the Holy Child's stay in Egypt was in a spiritual sense fatal to the idols inasmuch as He destroyed their power over men's hearts and minds. It is consoling to think that the vast supernatural

growth of the Church in Egypt later on was the blessing God gave that land because His beloved Son had tarried there in His infancy. That same Child tarries often in our hearts in Holy Communion, tarries always by His grace. We, too, often linger a Holy Hour in His presence; does He help us or do we help Him to destroy the idols in our souls?

Here may be recited Psalm 113.

THE HILLS OF NAZARETH

Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord; they shall praise Thee forever and ever.
Ps. 83:5.

I.

WHAT sacred memories entwine themselves around the thought of Nazareth! What fruitful lessons, to-day so needed, are suggested while pondering with devotion the life which was lived there, for well nigh thirty years, by the Holy Family!

Nazareth, the despised Galilean village nestling among the hills on the road which wound from the sea to Damascus, was the home of Jesus for by far the longest portion of His mortal sojourn among the children of men. The sweet word *home* stirs to their depths the tenderest emotions of the human heart. Men who have wandered far away into the darkness of shame and sin have been known to turn back at the recollection of home. Spirits that were crushed to earth have been raised up; cowardly hearts have been emboldened and fortified; arms which were tired and weak have been strengthened by the thought of the loved ones gathered about the fireside. The man feeding the hot furnace

and scorched by the heat; the girl with flushed cheek and bent shoulders, who works over the loom in the mill; the child with tired feet and dizzy brain, standing behind the store-counter all day; the fireman on the ladder facing death; the young man with passion running riot in his blood, each and all in every walk of life are braver, stronger and better for the thought of home.

What, then, should be the effect on our hearts of the thought of the earthly home of our Blessed Saviour and His loving Mother? It seems almost presumptuous to break the silence preserved by the Gospel concerning these quiet years. One fears to lift the veil and gaze upon the holy details of that home over which such secrecy broods. Yet that life was lived for us that in its study we should grow in strength and love. Our Lord spent this long period of His earthly career in the holy house at Nazareth that we might reproduce that life within our own homes. It is not the mere dwelling-place of our Lord's tarrying for thirty years, holy and sacred as it is, that matters; but the wondrous life which left an indelible impress upon that home, this it is which must be the object of our thoughts, our affections and our imitation. Later on, at the opening of His public career, the day He came out from the desert, two of John's disciples asked Him: "Master, where dwellest Thou?" and His answer, uttered in such tender accents: "Come and see," is addressed

to us as well as to them. We will enter, therefore, with all reverence into this model home to study the life led within its hallowed walls.

It is not hard to picture to some extent the beauty of the childhood and youth of Mary's Son. In that peaceful and obscure dwelling the days of prayer and toil succeeded one another, undisturbed by any evidence of passion or of selfishness. No frown of temper, no blemish of self-seeking, no harsh tone, no unkind word, no impatient look, no occasion for an apology, will ever mar the peace and happiness of that blessed family. Yet it is precisely faults of this nature which little by little bring discord and unhappiness to many Catholic hearths and sometimes ruin otherwise Christian lives. St. Luke tells us Joseph and Mary "having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and His parents knew it not." The reason of this sad separation our Lord Himself gives us: "How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" Then the Gospel adds: "And He went down with them to Nazareth: and was subject to them. And His mother kept all these words in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men."

Here, then, is the picture of the life at Nazareth as the Evangelist has painted it for us. Jesus "went down" to a life of obedience, carrying out in every least detail, every

slightest circumstance, the wishes of His reputed Father and His holy Mother. "He went down" to a life of labor. Who can doubt but that His limbs were fatigued by work and His hands hardened by toil in the work-shop of Joseph? Picture Him during His youth and upgrowing years, learning from Joseph the trade of a carpenter. How strange! "Shall anyone teach God knowledge, who judgeth those that are on high?" And again we read: "O eternal God, who knowest hidden things, who knowest all things before they come to pass." "He went down" and was taught by Joseph. Those hands that used the saw and the hammer were the hands of Him who said: "I am the Lord that make all things, that alone stretch out the heavens, that establish the earth." Yet those hands now suffer from fatigue, that later on will, by their touch, banish darkness from blind eyes and cause the scales to fall from suffering lepers. One day they will rest on the heads of little children and young hearts will be glad and grateful faces will gaze up into His loving eyes. One day, too—perhaps their hardening now is in preparation—those hands will bleed when the nails shall be driven through nerve and tendon to fix them to the cross. "He went down" to a life of prayer. What a lesson, for the Catholic home to picture the Infant Jesus at His Mother's knee, lisping His first sweet prayers! How sad the thought that there are parents from whose lips their children learn

the irreverent use of God's name instead of hearing it in prayer and love! Then as the years lengthen will He begin the habit of "rising a great while before day," and, leaving the valley below asleep, climb to the top of Nazareth's hills to commune with His Father. In after years He will spend whole nights on the mountain-top in the "prayer of God."

The hidden life of Jesus was one in which He "was subject to them." With what adoration and trembling love they must have exercised their authority! And now, taking our eyes from the Child, let us turn them towards Mary and Joseph. We read in Holy Writ: "A brave woman is the delight of her husband, and shall fulfil the years of his life in peace." Who can tell the peace and joy which Mary brought to that home and to the heart of Joseph? They were poor under that roof, though the riches of the Father dwelt there. Days of hard, grinding toil fell to their lot. But it is not wealth, or comfort, or leisure, or social prestige which makes a home. Palaces and mansions of cut stone; vulgar, ostentatious residences; houses which cost fabulous sums; carpets of oriental dye, texture and design; furniture rich and rare; works of art from the chisel of a Michel Angelo, or from the brush of a Murillo or Correggio, all these and more do not make a home. A home is not built by a mason, designed by an architect, and furnished by a purveyor of antiques. The true

home is that in which the spirit of Nazareth resides. If in the hearts of the parents there is a love and mutual reverence akin to what was in the hearts of Mary and Joseph; if there is a love for the children and their higher interests, founded upon the love felt for Jesus in the Holy Family, then, though all else be wanting, there is a real home. Possibly the house may be poor and unattractive, the floors and the walls may be bare, sickness and hardship may linger about the fireside; but if the spirit of Nazareth is in that home, these crosses, trials and privations will only knit affectionate hearts closer together, and fan to greater brightness and warmth the flame of mutual love. Given this spirit, a cottage becomes a home; without it, the gilded palace is a mere lodging-house.

What of our Catholic homes? When all has been said it remains true that it is the mother who makes or mars the home. The mother, who will be mistress of her family as Mary was at Nazareth, cannot fail. If she reigns over her family on any other principles she cannot succeed. It is much to be feared that many Catholic homes to-day are losing sight of the life lived at Nazareth by the Holy Family. In many cases the duty of caring for young children is relegated to the tender care of paid nurses, in whose hearts is more love for the children confided to their keeping than in the soul of the society-loving mother. Then, too, there is the modern woman, who neglects

her own offspring, looking after the poor and orphan—other people's children. How little of Mary's spirit is here! Is it becoming old-fashioned to teach children their morning and evening prayers? One would suspect so when one hears of the theatre parties and other worldly pastimes indulged in by mothers whose children are yet in their infancy and younger years. But have people no duties to their friends and society? Most assuredly. Yet the duty of parents to their children, though old-fashioned, comes first, and the obligation of attending to their spiritual welfare ought not to take second place.

Nowadays how many parents are guided by the spirit of Nazareth in the selection of a suitable school for their boys and girls? Our Lord says: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His justice and all these things shall be added unto you." If our children fail in this, no matter what else they gain, their lives are failures. If they succeed in this, no matter what else they fail in, their lives are a success. How are they to be taught this truth so vital for their eternal happiness, if the schools chosen for them, or which they themselves nowadays choose, are selected, not on account of the religious character of the teaching, not on account of the safeguarding of the Faith, but because a school is fashionable, or its terms are high, or it is attended by the sons or daughters of people of wealth and distinction, as is sometimes said? What these people

are distinguished for is often hard to see. At times there is nought but a vulgar display of the wealth which they did not earn themselves but inherited from others who became rich suddenly or by devious ways. How often are they not laughing in their sleeves at the toadyism of the new-rich Catholic who is trying at all hazards to burst a way into the society of people whose chief social distinction is their freedom from religious ties? And yet it is with the sons and daughters of such that our well-to-do Catholics (whose hard-working fathers came poor to this country in the days of famine or persecution) are desirous of being identified. When will our Catholic mothers, who in the providence of God are acquiring some of this world's goods, realize that it is not the gown that makes the lady nor the coat that makes the man? Neither the dressmaker nor the tailor can make the true woman or the true man. These are made, not by the raiment of the body, but by the clothing of the soul.

It is for the so-called privilege of associating with the sons and daughters of such as these that some of our Catholics, eager to climb the social ladder, are willing to expose the faith of their children. Surely where this spirit reigns there can scarcely be a home, for in such a house the atmosphere is not congenial for the increase of the spirit of the Holy Family at Nazareth.

Here may be recited Psalm 126.

II.

ONCE more we shall pass our Holy Hour beneath the shadows of the hills of Nazareth, where Jesus in His boyhood and growing manhood spent so many hours of His hidden life. Our thoughts instinctively turn to that holy home in Galilee and we naturally gaze prayerfully upon the life of Mary's spouse. As we ponder and study in prayer, the light grows in our minds, and our hearts warm with love for holy Joseph.

Of some holy persons intimately associated with the infancy of the Divine Child, such as Elizabeth, Zachary and John the Baptist, many precious details have been vouchsafed us, but of St. Joseph's early years little is told. This is, however, no matter of surprise, for much is left untold of our Lord's sacred career on earth and of His Blessed Mother's. Then it is well to remember with gratitude, that though many things are unspoken which would warm our hearts with devotion, it is ever true that these are

Love's choicest treasures, which the sacred story
Veils, half-untold, that we the more may muse.

Quite enough has been left us in Holy Writ to lead us deep into the secrets of St. Joseph's heart. In the sacred pages are the seeds which, sown and nourished in prayer, cannot fail to blossom and flower into warmer piety and deeper love. We have quite enough revealed to make us say in wonder of the Joseph of the New Dispensation what was said of the Joseph of the Old: "Can we find such another man that is full of the spirit of God?"

The name of Joseph comes before us for the first time in the sacred narrative as "the husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus," and through him our Lord Himself is connected with the holy line from which the promised Saviour was to descend. Joseph was gradually growing in years and approaching middle life in his retired and quiet home at Bethlehem. His days were passed devoutly, and in their flight no detail of the law was neglected. Years ago, when ministering in the Temple, Mary had vowed her virginity to God. The Creator alone was to be her Spouse and possess her Immaculate Heart. Now, however, in the designs of the Most High, she will soon need a kind and faithful protector for herself and her Child.

This maiden will one day be a mother and remain a virgin. The vow which almost as an infant she laid at the foot of the altar, will be kept, and yet she will be crowned with the highest dignity that even God can bestow;

she will be crowned with the dignity of a Divine Motherhood. Who, then, will be chosen to protect her fair name, to guard her honor? Who of the myriads of men created, or to be created, will, in the choice of God, be deemed worthy of this privilege? To the humble carpenter of Bethlehem came the call, and of Joseph we can say: "The bridegroom shall rejoice over the bride, and thy God shall rejoice over thee. These shall be perfect and without spot before the Lord thy God."

Later on when the Babe of Bethlehem is born and the dark days of Egyptian exile are over, when Mary in the quiet Galilean home carries in her arms the Divine Child who nestles trustingly on her breast, tell the simple Nazarenes that the Child is the Son of God, and that the Mother is a virgin; tell them that Mary is she of whom Isaias said: "A virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son and His name shall be called Emmanuel," and they will laugh you to scorn. Go out into the streets of Nazareth or Jerusalem and proclaim that the Maiden of Galilee is a mother and a virgin, and that her Child was conceived of the Holy Ghost by the power of the Most High; tell this to the Jewish world, and though you cite the prophets, you will not be believed. If Joseph is not there as the young Mother's husband and her Child's father in the eyes of men, that spotless maid will with shouts of derision be led forth outside the walls and

stoned to death, and her Child will be marked for life with the stigma of shame and disgrace. What a glory this! What a privilege to have protected from dishonor her whom the King would honor; to have guarded the fair name of the Divine Child! This then is St. Joseph's glory and the reason of our devotion to him, that he is Mary's spouse and the foster-father of our Blessed Saviour.

How rich in heavenly gifts, therefore, must Joseph have been to be found worthy of being the husband of Mary! Yet it is quite natural that, in virtue of this office, God should have made him rich beyond all telling in spiritual favors. When we reflect how munificent the Heavenly Father was towards Mary, His Daughter; the Eternal Son towards His Mother; the Holy Ghost towards His Spouse; when we remember that their first welcome to her was the Immaculate Conception to be followed by a labyrinth of graces into whose depths no human mind can reach, can we doubt that Joseph will be enriched with gifts and graces which will fit him for the high office for which he has been chosen? What can we say of his graces save what was said of old to King Assuerus: "What ought to be done to the man whom the king desireth to honor? The man whom the king desireth to honor ought to be clothed with the king's apparel . . . and to have the royal crown upon his head. . . Thus shall he be honored whom the king hath a mind to honor."

Joseph was also the foster-father of our Saviour. Years ago on Mount Moriah, in the Temple, Mary had offered her pure heart to God by her vow of virginity. Thus our Lord could have no natural earthly father. And yet to Joseph was granted every privilege and right of a natural father of her Divine Son compatible with the vow of earlier years. The paternity of St. Joseph was no mere title, no empty honor. In his heart was all the affection and all the love of a father for his Child. In virtue of his office he became the representative of the Heavenly Father and to him clung the shadow of the Eternal Father's incommunicable Paternity. The Divine Attribute of the Heavenly Father, which He could not communicate to the Eternal Son and Holy Ghost, His Adorable Paternity by which He is distinct from the Son and Holy Ghost, that Divine Attribute, in shadow and in figure, as far as it is communicable, is bestowed upon St. Joseph. Of course this Attribute could be communicated not even to the Son and Holy Ghost, but the shadow of it, so to speak, hangs over Joseph and in his heart there is, as far as a creature could receive it, a spark of the infinite love for the Son which burnt in the Father's bosom from the everlasting years. After Mary's love for the Babe of Bethlehem and for the Boy of Nazareth, there is no warmer love than that which burns in the heart of Joseph. With what truth may be applied to him the words of the Book of

Proverbs: "The keeper of His Master shall be glorified!"

Happy, indeed, were all the peaceful years which followed the return of the Holy Family from Jerusalem, "when He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them!" We cannot hope in this life to know the secrets of that holy home. How the angels must have worshipped in that home from the flush of dawn till darkening twilight and on through the silent watches of the night! Mary is ever mounting higher and higher in sanctity and her love becomes so strong and constant that it seems like the breath of her being. Every act of the Divine Child, every look and motion is fuel for that all-absorbing fire within her soul. From day to day Jesus manifests new changes. He grows from boyhood to manhood, and through Bethlehem and Egypt and the earlier days at Nazareth He reveals His loveliness; yet as the days pass away into weeks and months, and the maturity of His years is deepening, His beauty and attractiveness seem to sink deeper into the hearts of Mary and Joseph. Will not His face at times shine forth with the glory that later on was His when "He was transfigured before them, and His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow"?

Then, too, the thought of Calvary will cast a dark shadow over that silent home. As Jesus draws on towards manhood, the desire

to be baptized by a baptism of blood will become more intense. Mary knew years ago every least detail and slightest circumstance of that awful blood-shedding when she would be present at the death-bed of her Son. St. Joseph, too, will share those hours of suffering; and will it not be a further pain to him to know that Mary will have to stand alone and he will not be there to comfort her? He was with her at Bethlehem in its joys and sorrows, and was her companion over the desert to the distant lonely exile beyond the Nile; and in all the quiet years at Nazareth he was never absent; but now he knows that the day will come when that broken-hearted Mother will stand alone; a day when, if he were with her, he could at least share her pain; but in that dark hour he will be gone. Many a time and oft Joseph and the growing Boy will walk in the dusk together upon the surrounding hills. The sighing of the evening wind through the fig and olive trees will sound to the foster-father in sad notes like a requiem for his Son. Those eyes which now look lovingly into his, Joseph knows will one day close on the cross in the sleep of death. Those hands that are now hardening with daily toil in the carpenter shop, will one day bleed when the nails shall pierce them. Thus sorrowfully the dark and dismal shadows of the Passion will often be flung across the calm and prayerful soul of Joseph. But those dark shadows will create no darkness over that holy soul,

but will make St. Joseph bow down profoundly in adoring love before his God and his Child.

The years in the quiet home were swiftly running by. Rumors of the Baptist's life in the desert and his preaching on the banks of the Jordan were making their way from town to town in Galilee. Strange things were said of this son of Zachary, who had buried himself long ago among the hills which overlooked the Dead Sea. St. Joseph may have heard these marvels about John, but John's face he will never again look upon in this life. Joseph's work is over. He muses prayerfully over the scenes of Bethlehem, the exile, and the days of sorrowing when Jesus was lost. Each detail of those scenes stands out before his mind. And now from the happy solitude at Nazareth he is looking with dimming and expectant eyes towards the tomb. His life has been a happy one. It had not been without its crosses; but the cross is ever found with Jesus and Mary; and crosses are the gifts of the Sacred Heart to His closest friends. Who received more of the cross than His own Blessed Mother? Now the days of his sojourning are ending, and Joseph will soon go hence. No nook or corner of Eden before the fall can be comparable to his holy home. No angel-haunted cell of anchorite or consecrated nun could more than remotely resemble that silent dwelling among the Galilean hills. But the years are flowing on and Joseph will not linger much longer. His form is bent

now, as his spirit ever was in deepest reverence to the Child. His hair is thin and gray. His face, so often lit up with the light of another world, is tanned and wrinkled, and his step is feebler now and tottering as he makes his way to his daily toil.

Strange that one so near the source of strength could grow weak; that one so near Him who is "the Life" should die. Can the shadow of the grave fall over him who has held in his arms the One who is from the Eternal Years? Yet death is about to enter the holy home of Nazareth and come close to Jesus Himself who is Everlasting Life; close to Him in whom "we live, and move, and have our being." Death will not touch Him till some years later, when He bids it come to Him on the cross. But to Joseph death has come.

There have been many death-bed scenes in the world, but never a death like this. His thoughts go back—as the thoughts of the dying sometimes will—to other days and other years. He will think of the first cold, bleak Christmas night when he saw for the first time the face of the Babe of Bethlehem, and now he is looking at it for the last time with mortal eyes. Before he sees that face again it will be bruised and marked by dust and blood, and the fingers of the servant of the High Priest will strike it in anger. Joseph will be spared that sight—perhaps he has often seen the same in a vision when our

Lord's face has been lit up in prayer. Dying he will read in Mary's eyes her gratitude and love. How happy their life had been because they had both toiled and labored for Jesus! No life that is lived for Him can be aught but happy.

Again our dying saint will turn and look into the face of our Blessed Saviour. In those eyes he had read love years ago, but never did that love seem so deep and so tender as now. Those sacred eyes with a glance will melt Peter's heart, will bring pardon and trust to Magdalene; they will weep tears over Jerusalem and at the tomb of Lazarus, but never have human eyes shone with such warm love and melting tenderness, as did the eyes of that loving Son looking into the white face of His dying foster-father. Joseph speaks for the last time. His face lights up and his eyes are fixed upon the brightening countenance of our Blessed Saviour, and on it Joseph sees a look of love and a smile of welcome such as he had never seen before through all the years of intimacy. "Jesus, Mary!" he feebly whispers once more, and as he pronounces Mary's sweet name, the lips of Jesus touch him and Joseph dies in the kiss of the Lord. We, too, shall die. May we die the death of the just, and may our going forth be like to that of Joseph in the presence of Jesus and Mary, with their sweet names on our dying lips!

Here may be recited Psalm 83.

MOUNT MORIAH

My house shall be called the house of prayer for all nations. Is. 56:7.

ON Mount Moriah, long years before the Blessed Master looked with eyes of love upon that holy hill, was witnessed an example of tender devotion to the dead. In the days of the Machabees, Judas, flushed with victory, did not forget those who were slain; "and making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection." This sacred mountain, with its Temple to which Judas sent the offering, was dear to our Saviour's Heart. To no other place on earth did so many holy memories cling. Round it clustered the saddest and the happiest recollections. From the earliest dawn of history it had been held in veneration by God's chosen people. How like the mountain of the Catholic altar about which cling the sweetest and the holiest memories of our lives! From the cradle to the grave our lives are linked with the Tabernacle, where He hath made darkness His hiding-place. When, too, we wander like the prodigal into a far distant country, and a famine comes over

our homesick souls, it is the lamp of the sanctuary that is our beacon-light back again to our true home at the feet of Jesus.

Mount Moriah, in the northeastern section of Jerusalem, is redolent of sacred and cherished reminiscences. It was probably on this holy height that Melchisedech the King of Salem, bringing forth bread and wine—for he was a priest of the Most High God—blessed Abraham and said: "Blessed be Abraham by the Most Holy God." How many a blessing comes into our lives from the Great High Priest who, with tear-stained cheeks and melting love, changed the bread and wine, typified by Melchisedech's sacrifices, into His own Body and Blood!

It was probably to Mount Moriah that God referred when He said to Abraham: "Take thy only begotten son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go into the land of vision, and there thou shalt offer him for an holocaust upon one of the mountains which I will show thee." Could our Blessed Saviour, centuries later, now rest His eyes on that mount of vision, and not remember the sacrifice so soon to be consummated, of Himself, the Only Begotten of the Father? Yet not soon enough would this sacrifice be consummated for that loving Heart which yearned for the baptism of blood.

Over Mount Moriah David saw the sword of the angel stayed, when God had heard his prayers and ceased to chastise the people for the sins of their king. What is it which stays

the wrath of avenging angels against a sinful world? Where are their drawn swords sent back into the sheath, if not over the altar and before His Tabernacle, where the angelic legions bend in adoring love? It was on this mountain that God commanded Solomon to build the Temple. "Thou shalt make Me a Sanctuary. I will set My Tabernacle in the midst of you, and My soul shall not cast you off. I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be My people." If this be true of the tabernacle of old of which "Moses said to Aaron: 'Take a vessel and put manna into it, as much as a gomor can hold, and lay it up before the Lord to keep unto your generations,'" what are we to think of the Tabernacle of the New Law in which is contained not the manna of which men eat and thereafter die, but the manna which liveth and maketh to live with a divine life? Of this heavenly food He Himself said as He stood by the lake outside Capharnaum: "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven; that if any man eat of it he may not die. I am the living Bread which came down from heaven."

Our Blessed Saviour was first on Mount Moriah when His Mother took Him there to present Him in the Temple. Forty days had come and gone since the angels chanted at His birth; and Mary and Joseph make their way to Jerusalem by the road Abraham walked from Hebron to the Mount of Vision. Simeon

was waiting there for the expectation of Israel and his feeble arms were holding Him up who holds the universe in the hollow of His hands. The dimming eyes looked upon the Salvation of Israel; eyes that were growing dark with age and misty with tears of longing, gazed upon the very face of God. Then the venerable saint who lingered long about the Temple courts was satisfied to depart in peace. No joy of earth could win and hold the heart of him who had looked into the eyes of Jesus, the joy of angels. And for us what memories now must flood the soul? We receive so often, not into our arms, but into our hearts, this same Saviour, and in His august presence how tardily, if at all, the joys of earth seem to wane in their attraction, to weaken in their sweetness, to lose their relish! How seldom, too, the peace which flowed into the heart of the aged priest flows into ours! May not the reason be that we do not accustom ourselves to look forward with holy expectancy to the coming of Mary's Child into our hearts, and that when He does enter under our unworthy roof He finds the room of our heart not rich with the adornments of virtue, but arrayed in the tawdry trappings of natural views, natural affections, and natural aspirations—wearing, indeed, a very different aspect from the one He might well look for there?

When Jesus had grown from childhood into all the brightness and attractiveness of boyhood, His sacred feet trod for the first time

the top of Mount Moriah and the marble pavement of the Temple. "And when Jesus was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. And after they had fulfilled the days, when they returned, the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem and His parents knew it not." The feast is over, every holy rite and ceremony required by the law has been carried out in its least detail, and yet the Divine Boy clings to Mount Moriah, and will not leave the Temple. Sadly from the recesses of the colonnade, He will watch Mary depart with the women, and Joseph with the men; yet He tarries on the holy hill, tarries though His loss will cast the shadow of Calvary over His Mother's heart. Yet even that He will endure to do the Father's will and strengthen us by the lesson of this mystery. How He abides on our altars though the wrongs done to His Sacred Heart are tenfold those which pierced the Immaculate Heart of His Mother, though they are a hundredfold more than those He foresaw, as from the Temple Mount, He looked down the narrow streets of Jerusalem and recalled that its stones would one day be stained with His Blood! Is He wronged and is His Sacred Heart scorned, as He looks out from behind the Tabernacle door into our hearts? When He sees our too worldly aspirations, our coldness of heart, our indifference to His interests, is He not more lonely for our love, than He was that chilly day in March, when

Mary and Joseph all unsuspecting left Him in the Temple?

His next recorded visit to the Temple is at the beginning of His public ministry. After the marriage feast of Cana, "He went down to Capharnaum, He and His Mother and His brethren and His disciples; and they remained there not many days. And the pasch of the Jews was at hand and He went up to Jerusalem." Vast multitudes were thronging to the Holy City, as usual, for the Passover. Jesus mingled with them and was jostled aside by the crowds. They knew Him not, yet all the time He was yearning to teach them the doctrine of the Kingdom. He ascended to the top of Mount Moriah, "and He found in the Temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when He had made, as it were, a scourge of little cords, He drove them all out of the Temple . . . and He said to them that sold doves: "Take these things hence, and make not the house of My Father a house of traffic."

Three years later at His last Passover He again cleansed the Temple—the house of His Father. He would suffer no desecration of that holy house. So again with the shadows of the Passion gathering around His soul, with holy anger and indignation, He drove the buyers and sellers from the sacred precincts with whips and blows. Not till He had purified the holy hill and its Temple would His

blessed lips utter His dying message. From His tabernacle-home He yearns for the purity not merely of the Temple on Mount Moriah—a Temple red with the blood of sheep and oxen—but for the purity of our souls, the living temples of the Holy Ghost, which He has cleansed by His own Precious Blood. "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

"Take these things hence," He said of old on Mount Moriah; and so, from His altar as He looks deep into our hearts, He whispers to each of us, "take these things hence," they soil God's temple. To one He says: "Banish worldly aims and aspirations that draw you away from God." To another He whispers that self-love and self-will must be cast forth; to another still He suggests more kindness and less uncharitable speaking. Not unfrequently the temple of our souls is tarnished even in our very exercises of piety and devotion, either because we seek in these not His will, not our own self-conquest, but our own will and our own spiritual gratification, to the neglect of real, though less attractive duties. When we kneel before His altar, let us ask Him to point out any thought, any affection, any attachment which has not His approval, and this by His grace we will root out. Thus the beauty of God's temple will grow within us from more to more as the days advance.

Here may be recited Psalm 68.

THE MOUNT OF TEMPTATION

Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice, and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation. ECCLESIASTICUS 2:1.

THE quiet days of the Hidden Life are no more. The beautiful home among Nazareth's hills is broken up. Our Lord, at the age of thirty, leaves for good the abode of His growing years, and Mary is alone in her sorrow. The next time her Son enters His native town the men of Nazareth will cast Him forth. "And all they in the synagogue hearing these things were filled with anger. And they rose up and thrust Him out of the city." What a wealth of tenderness in the parting of the Son from the Mother! What comfort, too, the thought of that separation brings! Never were human hearts so intimately knit together. Eighteen years ago, in the busy, crowded Jerusalem, He had gone out from His Mother's sight for three dark days. The Egyptian darkness, that lay on the Nile in the time of Pharao, was not as black as the sorrow which brooded over Mary's spirit. Then the parting was for three days. Now He goes forth never to return again, and no more shall the sound of His footsteps be heard in the home of His childhood and youth.

Mary, no doubt, as the Gospel seems to imply, will follow Him, at least at times, from place to place, abiding and tarrying with Him occasionally perhaps, but dependent commonly upon the kindness of their friends. At all events it seems certain that the loved home in Galilee is to know Him no longer, and its peaceful, happy years have sped away forever. One wonders if our Lady will think of that other parting three years hence, when from the cross He will bow His bleeding head, and with bruised and dust-stained lips speak a last farewell and leave her a desolate, heart-broken Mother at the foot of the cross on Golgotha. There are separations, oh! so painful, in our lives—separations, too, only for a time, yet what a passion of grief they evoke! But when the parting is till eternity, when we stand by the death-bed of the loved ones and yearn to take their place, then only those who have spoken that sad good-by can tell the keenness of the sorrow. Into all our lives this bitterness must come, and what thought can make it sweeter than the recollection of our Lord's pain and our Mother's courage?

Our Blessed Lord had come with the daily increasing throng to the banks of the Jordan and had been baptized by John. With what joy our Lord must have listened to the brave and stinging words of His Precursor! The priests were not accustomed to speak, nor scribe nor pharisee to hear such unmistakable utterances in the synagogues. Such lan-

guage had not been heard since the days of the prophets, since the preaching of Isaias and Elias and Jeremias. The clear ring of John's voice vibrated along the shores of the river, and lashed the hypocrisy of priest and pharisee, rebuked the extortions of the Roman soldiers, and urged the people to prepare for the coming of the Messias. Here was a man who spoke no fine formalities, no honeyed phrases such as could be heard in any synagogue; but a man with the fire of zeal in his eye, with courage on his sun-tanned face, and courage deep down in his brave breast. "And John the Baptist came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching in the desert of Judea the baptism of penance for the remission of sin, saying: 'Do penance for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" When John had baptized our Blessed Lord, out from the opened heavens came in dove-like form the Holy Spirit; and from on high the Father proclaimed of the carpenter's Son of Nazareth: "This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

"And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from the Jordan, and immediately was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. And He was in the desert forty days and forty nights; and He was with beasts, and He did eat nothing in those days." The battle is on and the struggle has begun. The immediate preparation for His public life has been taken up—not for

His need but for our example—and our Blessed Master goes forth to the wilderness to fast and to pray. His soul, ever united to the Godhead, is even more than ever filled with the deepest emotions and holiest feelings. For forty days He will shun the haunts of men, weaken His body by abstaining from all food and drink, and notwithstanding the pangs of hunger and the burning of thirst, He will commune unceasingly with His Heavenly Father.

The same must every soul in a measure do if it would effect aught for souls and for God. Whoever will touch and influence for good and sanctify the lives of others must first sanctify himself. And who is there who does not wish to lift up the fallen, heal the bruised, and take the burden off saddened hearts? The great levers for effective work in the spiritual world are prayer and self-conquest. Unless our words come from a heart that from time to time goes out from the haunts of men and mounts to the throne of God, our words will not be hot and will not burn into men's lives. Unless we come from the audience-chamber of the King, we cannot give His message. Unless we listen in silence from time to time, at fixed intervals, to the voice of God, and banish idle and frivolous thoughts and purposes, we shall never speak words of weight which tell in the lives of those who could otherwise be enlightened and strengthened by our efforts. How easy were it for

us to go to the desert of His Tabernacle, especially during some holy season, and hear His voice and receive His message! How sad to think that there are sorrowing hearts we could console, weak spirits we could strengthen, timid souls we could make brave, heavy burdens we could lift from lives; yet in this labor of love for the Master we are found wanting, because we will not conquer ourselves, and will not go out from the haunts of pleasure, from time to time, to the desert of His Tabernacle! Oh, the joy of being with Him, once the soul tastes and sees how sweet the Lord is!

Out into the desert our Lord was led by the spirit. The scene of His temptation and fasting has been placed by tradition on a mountain west of Jericho. No wilder or more desolate region can be found in all Palestine. Along the hillsides and ridges there is nothing but a stunted, starved growth upon which famishing animals browse and barely eke out a suffering existence. Here truly, on every side, the struggle of nature between life and death is keen and fierce. It is not so hard or hopeless as the struggle of the soul which tries to satisfy itself upon nourishment of earthly aims and purposes, upon worldly pleasure and gratifications, and neglects the food of life. On these arid and desolate peaks our Blessed Saviour fasted and prayed for forty days and forty nights.

He could look down upon the heavy cobalt

waters of the Dead Sea, sadly redolent of the memories of Sodom and Gomorrah. Off in the distance to the east, high above the waters on the cliffs, our Lord can see the marble palace of Herod, with its tower and pinnacles gleaming in the morning light which streams above the hills of Moab. Will He think of the dungeon beneath its feasting and dancing hall, where one year later the Baptist will be a prisoner listening to the dirge which the waters of the sea will play as they strike the rocks? No doubt the scene in the festive hall will stand out clearly before His mind. The dancing maiden, the voluptuous music, the half-drunken revellers, the scheming mother, the wicked king and the head of the Baptist, all will appear distinctly before Him. He will call to memory the words of John: "He must increase, I must decrease." Over this picture of sin His Sacred Heart will sorrow. Does any act of ours, any participation, especially in the holy season of Lent, in worldly amusement, add to His pain and scandalize our Catholic friends and acquaintances? Oh, for more of the courage, penance and prayers of the Baptist! It would then be so easy to climb the steep hills near Jericho and spend a penitential season with our suffering Master.

From His cave-shelter on the heights He can look over to Mount Nebo beyond the Jordan. Thence Moses with dying eyes gazed upon the Land of Promise which he might

not enter. "Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab upon Mount Nebo to the top of Phasga over against Jericho; and the Lord showed him all the land of Galaad as far as Dan. On this mountain Moses died and was buried in the land of Moab over against Phogor, and no man hath known of his sepulchre until this present day." Our Blessed Saviour is the Lawgiver of the New Law. He leads His people not from the slavery of Egypt, but from the slavery of sin. He feeds them in the desert not upon a manna, which they will eat and die, but upon a manna which will give life and give it more abundantly. He guides His people not to a promised land bounded by the Jordan and the Great Sea, but to a kingdom which has no limits, and of which there is no end.

Below Him and beyond Jericho flows the Jordan through the valley in its winding course from the Lake of Galilee to the Dead Sea. The place can be seen where the Israelites crossed the river under the leadership of Josue and Caleb, the only two left of the vast multitude who came out of Egypt. There, below, the river stopped and from that point the waters flowed on into the Dead Sea; those above stood still and piled up like a high wall of glass while the people of God crossed dryshod to the other bank. At that place they built a memorial of their gratitude with twelve stones, which may remind our Blessed Saviour of the twelve Apostles He is

soon to choose who will plant the Church of God in their blood.

"And He did eat nothing in those days." No food or drink for those forty days crossed His lips. He fed the birds of the air, and the multitudes in the desert for forty years, and Elias He fed, so that for forty days and forty nights he walked unto the very mountain of God. Daniel He fed in the lion's den and on the lake-shore He will feed the five thousand who will follow Him around the lake and listen to His voice and look up into His face. He "cannot send them home hungry lest they faint by the wayside." He will feed the souls of His Apostles on the night before His Passion, and the memory of that gift they will renew daily. He will sit at supper with Cleophas and his companion at Emmaus, and they will know Him in the breaking of the bread. On Tiberias' shore at the dawn He will bid them "come and dine," but He Himself "did eat nothing in those days."

What are we to do for the Master who fasted for us? From the desert of His Tabernacle He looks into our hearts and asks for the conquest of our sensuality. Are we curbing and checking it? Not merely in those things where to yield were sinful, but in many little indulgences which, without sin, we might enjoy? Are we to be the pampered soldiers of a crucified Leader? Many of us dine frequently with Him at His altar at the dawn;

does this spiritual banquet find us daily more detached from the pleasures of the senses, less eager for comforts, climbing steadily up towards His Blessed Mother at the foot of the cross?

Here may be recited Psalm 54.

THE HILL OF THE CALL

I.

And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray; and He passed the whole night in the prayer of God. ST. LUKE 6:12.

IT was upon our Lord's return from the Passover at Jerusalem in the first spring of His public ministry, that He spent the night of which there is question, "in the prayer of God." When, even thus early in His active career, opposition began to manifest itself, "Jesus retired with His Disciples to the sea; and a great multitude followed Him from Galilee and Judea, and from Jerusalem and from Idumea and from beyond the Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, hearing the things which He did, came to Him." How ceaseless must have been the toil, how heavy the labors which fell to His lot during these days among the thronging crowds which flocked from all directions! "He healed many, so that as many as had ills pressed upon Him to touch Him." When His limbs were tired, His body fatigued, and His mind weary from these loving ministrations, He sought repose during the silent hours of the night "in the prayer of God." How

close we could get to the Sacred Heart if when we are disheartened in the monotonous struggle for daily bread or weakened in the conflict with our own evil tendencies, we would only join Him in the lonely vigil on the mountain of His altar. But unfortunately so many stay away and will not hear that Heart pleading: "What, couldst thou not watch one hour with Me?" How lovingly and tenderly we could watch at the bedside of a sick or dying friend! Yet this Friend pleads with us to stay an hour with Him before His Tabernacle and we allow some noisy and worldly amusement to hold us away and draw us from His holy mountain of sacrifice.

The hill which was the scene of our Lord's prayerful solitude is situated some six miles west of Tiberias. From its height looking towards the north He could see the dark cedars of Lebanon standing out against the sky flushed by the last rays of the sinking sun as it plays among the moving branches. His mind may go back to the days of Solomon, when from these forests were cut the cedars used in the erection of the Temple on Mount Moriah. Off to the northeast like a silver serpent twists and turns the white road, through the green fields and over hills from the sea to Damascus. Here and there it is dotted by moving caravans bearing "the wealth of Ormus and of Ind" to the great eastern emporium. Directly to the east lie Tiberias and the lake on whose curved shores, sleep-

ing in the evening shadows, are Magdala and His loved Capharnaum and Bethsaida. What a desecration that the lake hallowed by so many holy memories and sanctified by deeds never before or since wrought by human hand, should have been daily profaned by the orgies at Tiberias, whose palaces and baths were rivalling not in splendor only, but in luxury and vices, those of Rome itself! On toward the south the Jordan issues from the lake and wends its tortuous way towards the Dead Sea.

But of the natural scenery before His eyes, our Blessed Saviour will take little heed. His thoughts will turn to other things closer to His Heart. It is a remarkable fact in our Saviour's life, that He was wont to spend in prayer the nights which preceded the more important events of His mission. Thus He passed in prayer the whole night before He made to His Apostles and the Jews the great promise to give them the Blessed Sacrament. Before His voice rang along the lake in those words of melting love: "I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven," He lingered all night long on the cliffs in communion with His Father. Again when the shadows and sorrows of the Passion were gathering and thickening about His spirit and His soul was "sad unto death," Gethsemani saw Him on His knees with hands and eyes uplifted for three long hours. So now when we find Him after days of toil, painfully climb-

ing the hill, leaving His Disciples below and retiring into the solitude and darkness, we can conjecture that the morrow will be a day fraught with some event of no ordinary significance for His Church and for souls.

Yes, that night is one that shall be forever memorable in the hearts of those who love Him. There had been in His life many nights of prayer and union with His Father. In Egypt, for instance, and often among the hills of Nazareth the dawn found Him in prayer, but then at break of day He could return to the home of His Mother who read so deeply into His Sacred Heart. Now He has parted from her and all the associations of His earlier years. To-night He is alone and the work of the public ministry has begun. One by one He can see the lights come out through the windows of the cottages in Capharnaum, live their short life and die. He can perceive the torches moving hither and thither over the lake as the fishermen toil patiently and quietly out on the water. Over the still air come to Him from Tiberias the sounds of merriment and revelry, but these will not distract or disturb Him kneeling on the dewy grass during the too quickly fleeing hours. Just as the dawn is waking to a new day over the hills of Moab and before the smoke of the sacrifices begins to ascend from the altar into the clear morning air, He rises from His knees and descends to His waiting Disciples.

Up to the present the Disciples, it is true,

had followed our Lord up and down the country, but as yet there was no close bond of union knitting them together. They loved to look into His face and listen to the persuasive sound of His voice, the tones of which affected them and their lives, as no human words had ever influenced them before. His miracles and preaching had stamped an impress upon them. His words were not the cold, heartless repetitions they were accustomed to hear on the Sabbath in the synagogue at Capharnaum. They were words which burned into their hearts, from the lips of a Man who was in sympathy with every sorrow and every joy of the people. This loyal band then, under the influence of the teaching and example of such a Master, had to a certain extent cast in their lot with Him. But now the night of prayer is over and with His face lit with the light of heaven and His Heart aglow with love for His Church, He is about to select and pick out for a closer following of Himself the chosen twelve. "And when it was day, He called His Disciples, whom He would Himself and they came to Him. And He chose twelve of them whom He also called Apostles that they should be with Him and that He might send them to preach."

This surely is a strange selection. Hillel, Gamaliel and other Jewish teachers in Jerusalem had their followers who could be counted by hundreds—chosen not from among the rugged fishermen who nightly toiled upon

the lake of Galilee, but from those in the highest walks of life in the capital. Yet our Blessed Saviour picked out twelve unknown, ignorant and uncouth men, not to carry on the work of a Hillel or a Gamaliel, but to spread the kingdom of God upon earth. These simple, uneducated men were to "plant the Church of God in their blood." They were to be witnesses to their Master "unto the ends of the earth," and were to bear testimony to Him and to His teaching by their lives and by their death. These simple and unlettered men, unknown outside the limits of Capharnaum and Bethsaida, whose names had never been heard at Tiberias or Jerusalem, without learning, devoid of the culture of Greece, ignorant of the rhetoric of Rome, would, when filled with "power from on high," shake the very throne of the Caesars till it toppled over and crumbled in the dust; and from the shattered and broken remains they would build up the throne of the Fisherman for the healing and the life of the nations.

How true and brave they were that morning on the hilltop when the Master looked into their eyes and loved and called them! How full their hearts were as He passed among them and whispered to each: "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit: and your fruit should remain"! Of the twelve only one failed Him. Only one was found wanting and untrue to the call so lovingly

given, so readily accepted. All save Judas and John sealed with their blood the cause they that day espoused. Judas died a traitor, his lips red with his Master's blood. John tarried many years, ever yearning for the hour of blood-shedding which never came, and its failure to come was keener to his spirit than cut of sword to his aged body. At last the same sweet voice which had called in Galilee so long ago to labor and to toil, called him and bade him repose on the bosom where he rested at the banquet of the Master's love.

This story of the selection of the twelve is daily repeated from the lips of our Saviour in the hearts of tens of thousands of the Church's children. All of us are destined from the years of eternity for some special work in His vineyard. We cannot possibly imagine that He, who clothes the lilies of the field and feeds the sparrows of the air, would cast the children of His love and His blood aimlessly adrift upon the world without assigning them some definite work, some fixed calling. For "He made the little and the great, and He hath equally care of all. His eyes are upon the ways of men, and He considereth all their steps." Generally speaking, we all admit the fact that our Lord comes to the heart of each one and whispers with more than a mother's love His wishes. No one questions that it can be said to each one of us: "Blessed is he whom Thou hast chosen, and taken to Thee; he shall dwell in Thy

courts." To our hearts He says again and again: "Fear not for I have redeemed thee, and have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine." Our difficulty rather lies in recognizing the call, in being certain that it is His voice. Can we then know that our Blessed Lord is speaking to our souls, as truly as if we had been on the hill that morning when He came down from the mountain; as if we had looked into His face and had seen the love beaming from His eyes? Most undoubtedly we can, else there were no obligation to follow His bidding when He speaks.

Here may be recited Psalm 85.

II.

Blessed is he whom Thou hast chosen, and taken to Thee: he shall dwell in Thy courts. **Ps. 64:5.**

THESE words we can apply to those who listen to the voice of the Master and walk in the way He lovingly points out. We have not been cast adrift aimlessly upon the open sea of the world. Every human life is freighted with immense glory to the Sacred Heart if it is lived on the lines which God in His mercy points out. How are we to know the state of life to which we are called, for which our Heavenly Father has chosen us?

There are some calls about which there can be no doubt, no misgiving. When our Lord, after His night of prayer on the mountains, came down at the dawn into the valley, and, looking with love into the tanned faces of the fishermen, whispered to each of them: "Come: henceforth you shall be fishers of men," there could be no perplexity as to the will of our Blessed Saviour. Again, that day when Jesus was in Galilee and as He went forth, saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom, and said to him: "Follow Me," Matthew could have no hesi-

tancy as to the Master's wishes, he could entertain no doubt as to his manifest vocation.

Some years later, after the Apostles had looked upon our Blessed Saviour in the flesh for the last time, when they were fulfilling His injunction to be "witnesses unto Him even unto the ends of the earth," Saul, a young man of great energy and promise among the enemies of Christ, was on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus, armed with letters from the high priest for the taking of the Christians. "As he went on his journey, it came to pass, that he drew nigh to Damascus; and suddenly a light from heaven shined round about him. And falling on the ground, he heard a voice saying to him: 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?'" And Saul asking what he was to do, heard: "Arise and go into the city and there it shall be told thee what thou must do." Surely, when in the city Saul learned from Ananias that he was to be "a vessel of election," there could be no question in his mind as to his vocation. Again, in the First Book of Kings we read how God called Samuel in the night, when he "slept in the temple, where the Ark of God was." "And all Israel from Dan to Bersabee knew that Samuel was a faithful prophet of the Lord." Here again we have a direct call which excludes all misgiving.

These vocations, however, are extraordinary and unusual. To look for them when there are at hand the natural means of knowing

God's will, would be presumptuous. The Magi had surely been called by the apparition of the star in the East to the feet of the Babe of Bethlehem. The memory of that star had led them on and guided them from their distant homes, over the desert and over Mount Nebo and the Jordan, to the very walls of Jerusalem. In the Holy City the Magi could by their own efforts get an answer to the question: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" There would be little difficulty in learning from the chief priests the prophecy: "And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come the captain that shall rule My people, Israel." Had the Magi neglected the natural means to obtain this information they had never reached the Babe of Bethlehem and gazed into His loving face and beheld the welcome in His Mother's eyes or heard her gracious thanks. We cannot, therefore, look for the knowledge of a vocation through any extraordinary action of God's providence while the ordinary means are at our disposal.

A vocation can be defined as the qualifications for a state of life with the desire to embrace it. Evidently if our Lord wishes us to follow Him in a certain path, the first requisite is the bestowal of the ordinary qualities required. When these exist and with them a sincere desire in the soul for a particular calling, nothing else can be reasonably demanded.

If these qualities are lacking, no matter what the desire, clearly there is no call. One day when our Blessed Saviour had just finished laying His hands upon the heads of the little children, a young man came to Him beyond the Jordan and asked: "What shall I do that I may have life everlasting?" To the answer of Jesus: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," he replied: "All these have I kept from my youth, what is yet wanting to me?" Then Jesus said to him: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven; and come follow Me." Then St. Matthew goes on to tell in the next verse a story which has been repeated from that day to this, a story of defeat for the Heart of Christ. "And when the young man had heard this word he went away sad: for he had great possessions." This young man had all the qualities for the following of the Master; everything now depended upon his own will, his own choice. He had kept the commandments. If at this time he wished to be perfect, it depended upon himself to sell all and give to the poor and come and cast his lot with the Master. He refused and went away sad, as every soul must be sad that turns away from Christ. Outside of the light of that countenance, there must be darkness. Beyond the influence of His grace there must be weakness. Away from His sweet presence there must be lonesomeness if not despair.

Perhaps an illustration will make this important subject clearer. In New York there is a certain model Catholic home. The children—not insignificant in number—have grown to manhood and womanhood. One of the daughters, who is strong, intelligent and solidly pious, accepts the attentions of an honorable, upright Catholic man of the same social standing as the girl to whose hand he aspires. There is no question of his financial competency; that is assured; and he is Catholic to the heart's core, a desirable qualification not so common. His attentions are acceptable to the lady and she feels that she can give him her heart in honorable love. That would be a strange mother who should object to her daughter's marriage on the plea that she did not feel sure her daughter had a vocation for the married life. It would be strange if the mother should require some extraordinary sign that God approved of the proposed union. The girl has all the qualities to make a good wife and mother; she desires to enter the married state; a suitable offer has been made; surely in reason nothing more can be expected or required. How laughable it would be, if it were not sad, were the mother to insist on her daughter's entering a convent for a year or six months to find out if she had a vocation for the new state or sphere of life which is set before her!

But let us change the picture. In the same family there is another daughter, beautiful, in-

telligent and pious—not emotionally so—but solidly devout. She possesses a piety which ever rings true under the test of unselfishness and self-denial—the really safe proofs of devotion. This girl has finished at the academy and her heart longs for the day when she can go back and give up her life to God. Her health is sufficiently robust; she has the intellectual and moral qualities that fit her for the life. Her soul yearns to devote all its energies and its years to the training of children, to the care of Christ in His sick poor. She wants to spend her life and her talents in bringing back the wayward and those who in their wanderings, like Magdalene, are tarnished and stained. In one word she wants to give herself up to the religious life. This decision is not a sudden impulse; it is no emotional resolution, but has been arrived at after mature reflection and prayer. Has she a vocation? Is she called to follow Christ as truly as the Apostles were when our Lord came down from the mountain and chose them; as really as Saul was selected when Ananias delivered heaven's message? Is she destined for the religious state as certainly as her sister is for matrimony? Who can doubt or question it?

Yet how many mothers there are—it is a matter of daily occurrence and lives are daily blighted in consequence—who will consent to admit a vocation in the first instance and require other signs in the second. What dif-

ferent indication of God's will can be demanded short of a divine revelation or a miraculous intervention, which will not be forthcoming? Indeed, if it were granted it would not be accepted and the consent would be withheld. If a mother will permit her daughter to give her hand in honorable wedlock to an eligible suitor because her child has all the qualities that make a good wife and mother, and loves the man who offers her his heart and a home, how can she refuse her daughter who has all the qualities to be a religious, as well as the desire to embrace the higher life—how can a mother refuse this child to Jesus Christ when He comes asking for her heart and her hand? If no girl would hesitate and doubt about a vocation in the first instance, surely there can be no room for misgiving in the second.

Sometimes parents do not refuse outright to let their children embrace the holier life; but they plead for a delay. They insist that their children wait for a while, go out into society and see the world and its gaieties and pleasures. St. Luke tells that when our Lord was passing through Samaria "steadfastly facing" Jerusalem, a young man met Him and said: "I will follow Thee, Lord, but let me first take my leave of them that are at my home." Jesus said to him: "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." Again, on the same occasion, He said to

another: "Follow Me." And he said: "Lord, suffer me first to go and to bury my father." And Jesus said to him: "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou, and preach the kingdom of God."

These sayings seem hard, at first, from the lips of Him who was so gentle, who loved His own Mother so tenderly. Yet for three days she sought Him sorrowing while He was about the Father's business in the Temple. After thirty years of the sweetest and holiest intercourse that earth has ever witnessed, He left her to begin His public life, and the home at Nazareth was broken up and saw Him no more. When He put His hand to the plough for our welfare, He never looked back. When He calls, He wants no half-hearted answer. He wants the whole soul in all its youth, all its brightness, all its generous impulses. "If with your whole hearts you seek Me, you shall surely find Me." Had the Magi tarried and delayed they would never have found the Child and His Mother. Had Peter and Andrew lingered when His voice rang out along the lake-shore: "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men," they might never have been allowed that closer fellowship which became their privilege when the Master, coming down from His night of prayer in the mountain, picked them out to be His Apostles.

A parent who detains a son or daughter from religious life to see the world and its

vanities and pleasures, may live to rue such guilty action. If the child whom Jesus Christ wants to embrace the religious state must loiter in the world to test the call, then evidently the daughter who wishes to marry should retire to a convent to see if she has a vocation for the married state. A foolish suggestion! Yet marriage, being a lower state, ought to require more reflection on the part of those who enter upon it, than is demanded from those who embrace the religious life. There are no years of probation, there is no noviceship for the former as there is for the latter. If in choosing the religious life a false step is taken, it can be retraced. The doors of religious houses are barred and bolted against impulsive and sudden ingress, but ever open to those who are not happy and find that they have taken a false step. A mistake once made in the married state is irrevocable. There is no noviceship here. There is no retracing one's steps if a false one has been taken. The entrance is easy enough, but what God has joined together no man may dare put asunder, divorce courts to the contrary notwithstanding. Catholics are well aware that there is no separation till death.

Many speak as if we were entirely free to choose or reject the call of Jesus Christ, according to our good pleasure. That is a sad illusion. When God calls, who are we that we should turn Him a deaf ear? We must never forget that it is the Sacred Heart that

selects us: "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." It is an inestimable privilege to be chosen by that Divine Heart, but to reject the call is an unspeakable sorrow to ponder over in our souls with fear and trembling.

Here may be recited Psalm 138.

MOUNT THABOR

Thou art beautiful in form above the sons of men: grace is poured abroad in Thy lips: therefore hath God blessed Thee forever. Ps. 44:3.

IT was a Sunday evening in the spring when He came to Thabor. He had been up at Cesarea Philippi, where Peter had made the great confession, which flesh and blood had not taught him. Six days had He taken to reach that mountain from the up-country, while to come to us on the mountain of the altar, He has journeyed through the eternal years. How fatigued and worn He was when He rested on that mount for the first time in the supper-chamber. How He bled from every pore at the journey's end!

As the darkness from the hills of Gaulanitis creeps over Galilee, and the crimson glow is fading where the western sky drops into the sea, He climbs the mountain with Peter, James and John. He must have been as weary as the day He sat at Jacob's well and asked for the cool water that sparkled beyond His reach. Do the efforts which He makes to reach our hearts fatigue Him? Who could think so that knows? He never tires struggling for our poor souls. We know the reason full well.

"Where there is love there is no labor; or if there is labor, the labor is loved."

An entrancing view lay before our Saviour's eyes from the woody heights. Away in the distance the various objects stood out clear and distinct before the day had faded. How clear our spiritual vision becomes, when we look around about us from the altar! From its height and under its influence we see with a strengthened spiritual vision. "In Thy light we shall see light."

To the south stretched the plain of Esdraelon, the hills and valleys of Samaria, and the winding Jordan on its way to the Dead Sea. The white road over which, at the age of twelve, with Mary and Joseph, He went up to His first Passover, can be perceived in the dimming light, like a silvery ribbon lengthening out over the hills and through the fields. To the west, Mount Carmel is bathed in the glory of the setting sun. From its summit can be seen the white-winged ships freighted with the wealth of "Araby the Blest," making their way to the marts of Rome. As He gazes at Carmel and thinks of Elias and his sacrifices, and the unburnt holocausts of Baal's priests, will He think of the sacrifice which He will offer on Calvary? How can we doubt it, since in a few moments He will speak of His death to Moses and Elias? To the north is snow-capped Hermon and Lebanon, too, from which were cut the cedars for Solomon's Temple. East and north lies the Sea of Gali-

lee, so dear to His Heart, so familiar to His Apostles, so redolent of many of the sweetest memories of His blessed life.

Every least detail of that gorgeous panorama He saw in the dying light of that evening, but not as distinctly as He sees every slightest circumstance, every minutest particular of our griefs, our joys, our hopes and our fears, and with us sorrows and rejoices.

"His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became as white as snow," as He knelt in prayer. For a moment the fear-stricken Apostles may have thought the sun had changed its course and come back over Mount Carmel and was again glistening on the snows of Hermon or on the cedar groves of Lebanon, so dazzling was the aureole of brightness which lit up and radiated from the Master's face and garments.

It was a flash and lustre, not of earth but of Heaven; a glow, not of time, but of eternity; a flame not from the Body but from the Soul of our Blessed Saviour. For a moment the glory and beauty of His Heart seemed to beam forth, illuminating the darkness, the rocks and mountain herbage. In the exile of Egypt, in those lonely years—if years could be lonely when Jesus filled them —in the quiet of Nazareth in that prayerful room, did His face shine so that Mary saw it lit up? Could any light make that face brighter in His Mother's eyes?

When we kneel before His altar does He not

make His face to shine before our spiritual vision, and we realize that He is beautiful "above the children of men." Do we not then feel that we must exclaim with St. Peter: "Lord, it is good for us to be here"? There are joys in our homes, at our firesides, at our work, when we strive manfully to do our duty; but there is no joy like that we feel, when before the mountain of the altar His brightness shines in our hearts, the fire of His love glows in our souls. True, with mortal eye we cannot see His glory—no man can see it and live—but with the eye of faith we can peer beneath the sacramental veil and see "the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Ah! then "it is good for us to be here," good for us to ascend to the mount of the Tabernacle; in joy, that He may purify us; in sorrow, that He may wipe away our tears; when hearts are heavy and bruised, that He may lift their burden and heal them.

"And behold there appeared Moses and Elias talking with Him. And they spoke of His decease that He should accomplish in Jerusalem." The lawgiver of the Old Dispensation who had led the people of God out of the slavery of Egypt, is with the Lawgiver of the New, who was to lead the people from the captivity of sin and the thraldom of Satan. Elias was His prophet who brought the rain upon the parched earth, as the Master was soon to rain His Blood upon parched souls.

Elias, in the strength of the bread which the angels gave him, was to walk unto the very mountain of God. The Master is the living Bread, which the starving multitude must eat, if they are not to "faint by the wayside." Centuries ago, Elias gave back to the broken-hearted widow, in all the vigor of life, her dead son; and the Master had said to the dead boy of the widow of Naim: "Young man, I say to thee, arise."

"And they spoke of His decease, which He should accomplish in Jerusalem." The years of His public life were drawing to a close. At the beginning of His ministry, the angels ministered to Him. Now, at the ending, Moses comes from the grave, which no man knows and the tomb is soon to close over our Blessed Saviour. Elias comes; no one can tell whence. His place of tarrying is hidden from us. He comes in all the beauty of his incorruption to Him, who, though He shall see the grave, will never feel the effect of its corrupting power.

They spoke of His decease. Our Blessed Saviour loved to linger on the thought of death, because, no doubt, He was dying for us. We visit Him, like Moses and Elias—do we speak "of His decease," of that baptism for which He sighed, which He desired with so great a desire, that He was straitened till it was accomplished? Kneeling at His altar we can think of that death, from a love than which no man can have greater.

For "greater love than this no man hath that a man lay down his life for his friends." Yet we were His enemies.

The vision vanished. The darkness is disappearing from the eastern hills beyond the Jordan. Day is breaking over Moab's heights and flooding the river valley with light. He bids them "tell the vision to no one, till the Son of Man be risen from the dead." The time is coming when they shall need the memory of that blessed vision on the Mount. When the Master will not be on Thabor with face "shining like the sun and garments white as snow," but on Golgotha with His face disfigured, and bruised, stripped and nailed upon the cross.

They would need the memory of that night to strengthen the hearts of others, too, in days of doubt and trial. We, too, must make our way from time to time up the slopes of Thabor, not the Thabor in Galilee, but the Thabor of our Tabernacle. As, in repentance and sorrow for sin, we turn to Mount Calvary, as in sorrow and anguish of spirit our footsteps make their way to the Mount of Olives, and we see the Master sad, sad with a sadness which, if the Heavenly Father does not intervene, will steal His life away before He lays it down on the morrow; so in our joy and happiness we must go to Thabor, to the mount of joy on the altar.

There all pleasures and all gladness will be chastened and purified, and the memories of

those hours will linger with us in days of darkness and pain, to enlighten and comfort and strengthen us as did the memory of Thabor during after years in the hearts of the favorite three.

But our Holy Hour is over. We must go down from the mountain strengthened by the vision of His wondrous beauty. The memory of His sweet presence will linger with us to make us stout of arm and strong of spirit for His work.

Here may be recited Psalm 44.

THE HILL OF THE SACRIFICE

I.

The Lord loveth the gates of Sion above all the tabernacles of Jacob. Ps. 86:2.

IN the book of Leviticus we read: "And the fire on the altar shall always burn, and the priest shall always feed it, putting wood on it every day in the morning . . . This is the perpetual fire which shall never go out on the altar." In the Old Dispensation the fire of the sacrifice was kindled in the morning from wood put upon the altar by the priest. What is the fire on the altar of the New Law, "the fire which shall always burn and never go out"? Not merely the light of the sanctuary lamp, recalling the pillar of fire that hung over the Tabernacle in the darkness of the desert; nor merely the warmth of devotion in the heart of every good priest rekindled at daybreak when he goes up "to the altar of God." But it is rather the glowing flame of infinite love which burns in the Sacred Heart of the great High Priest, when He ascends the holy mountain as Priest and Victim.

No thought can compass, no mind conceive "the charity of Christ which surpasseth all

knowledge." On that holy hill His Heart is aglow with a fire which has burned from all eternity. Men can, with scientific precision, reach out to the planets and measure their distance; the plummet can search the depths of the sea and find its deep places, but our feeble imaginings can never rise to the heights nor delve into the depths of the love of the Sacred Heart in the Tabernacle of the New Law. We know indeed what human love is. Mothers' hearts are warm with it, as they stand over the cradle of their first born and look with glances of love into the eyes of their children. It blushes on the cheeks and glints in the eyes of the bride and groom when they kneel before God's altar to pledge their troth till death and beyond. In the heart of a self-sacrificing sister love for an erring brother is strengthened beyond the power of any tension of ingratitude to break. We are all familiar with the story of the strong love which knit and welded together the hearts of Damon and Pythias; and the tender affection of David and Jonathan we learned at our mother's knees in childhood days when we read the story of their attachment.

Now all the love of mother for child which has ever burned in human breasts; all the self-forgetting affection of devoted sisters which has ever nerved brave hearts for noble deeds and true; all the devotedness that has ever throbbed and thrilled in created souls; all the ecstacies of angelic spirits, all the melt-

ing heats of the fire in Mary's bosom; all these human, angelic, and almost divine loves which have glowed in human souls and glinted on human faces, all those loves multiplied seventy times seven and crushed unto the breaking into one great heart are but a single thread-like ray of the tender, melting love which burns in the Sacred Heart of our Blessed Lord as He is daily Victim and Priest on the mountain of the altar, the Hill of Sacrifice. Like the incoming tide of a mighty river, no barrier can stop it, no obstacle impede its progress and its rising. Like a wide, deep ocean whose waves never reach the shore; a fathomless sea whose farthest depths are never sounded; like a desert whose sandy reaches are ever receding, whose horizon is ever retreating, it is a world which cannot be measured, the edges of which cannot be scanned under even the clearest sky.

"And the light shall always burn and never go out on the altar." The first altar where that love burned was not the altar in the supper-chamber, on the eve of His death, when the shadow of the awful Good Friday was deepening about Him. We shall try to see in a moment how the fires raged in His Heart that night as the horrors of the morrow were brooding over His soul. The first altar was in the bosom of the Father. Cycles before the angelic world swifter than lightning flashed from the Father's love and power, sparkling with new created life more brilliant

than the first-born rays on the mountain-top, that love for us burned fiercely in the only begotten Son in the Father's bosom. "Yea, I have loved with an everlasting love," we are told in Holy Writ.

But it was on the last night of His mortal life that this "everlasting love" found its tenderest and most enduring expression. Of our great High Priest that night, it is said: "I will open rivers in the high hills and fountains in the midst of the plains. I will pour out water on the thirsty ground and streams upon the dry land." The love of the Sacred Heart is no barren sentiment, no sterile affection; its type is the mother's love which prompts the feeding of her child with the milk of her breast.

When Moses had led the people out from the slavery of Egypt across the Red Sea, and they were in the desert without food, "all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness." "And the Lord spoke to Moses saying: I have heard the murmuring of the children of Israel: say to them: 'In the evening you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread.'" At the dawn for forty years God fed His people in the desert. As they wandered over the barren sands, fought their enemies, were defeated one time and triumphed at another, as generations came and went, were born and passed away, daily at the dawn God fed His people,

and the manna did not cease to be their food till the wanderers were in possession of the wheat fields of Canaan forty years from their fathers' setting-out from the land of Egypt.

Here is the type and figure of the Master's love for us on the mountain of the altar in the New Law. Like the Jews of old, we are pilgrims from slavery, not of Egypt, but of sin. Our steps are turned, not towards the Promised Land beyond the Jordan upon which Moses looked down ere he died, but towards "the new Jerusalem, the City of God, which hath no need of sun, nor of the moon to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Thither we are daily tending. At times our enemies, like those of the Hebrews of old, are many and strong, and in fierce battle and desperate struggle do they strive. Our weakness is often great and many a time our arms threaten to fall from our hands and our hearts are timid. Where shall we get strength in our feebleness, courage in our timidity, light in our darkness, food and drink when otherwise our souls in the combat shall perish of hunger and thirst? How beautiful the answer given us by the Psalmist in his distress: "I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains from whence help shall come to me"! Daily at the morn He is on the mountain of the altar and thence will come our help and our strengthening. At sun-up every morning on the holy hill breaks forth the self-same outburst of

melting love from His Sacred Heart, that manifested itself in the supper-chamber the night before He died. How touching the scene! How it lets us enter into the secrets of the Sacred Heart! Let us dwell on it for a moment.

The three years of His public life are over. No more will He tread with the loved Apostles the hills and valleys of Galilee or the white beach of the lake. No longer will they be seen along the winding road through Samaria or in the Temple porches, or on the banks of the Jordan. The days of His mortal pilgrimage are drawing to a close; the evening of His earthly life is come. He has gathered His dear ones about Him for the last time and with the eyes of His unglorified body will look upon them no more.

Early in the evening they have come with Him from Bethany over the Mount of Olives and gathered for the Paschal Supper in the Cenacle in the southwestern section of Jerusalem.

It is a clear, calm night without. All is quiet in the streets of the city on the eve of the great festival. The paschal moon is full and bright in the sky, and its light is glinting from the turrets and roofs of the Temple. Here and there within the sacred precincts torches and lights may be seen moving, for the priests are preparing for the ceremonies of the morrow. Perhaps, too, there may be heard some unusual noise in the colonnades of the Temple

as preparations are going on that will end in a greater sacrifice than the commemoration of the Passover.

Within the supper-chamber every least detail and every slightest circumstance required by the Law has been carried out. And now the moment has come when the great High Priest is to put aside the symbols and the types and offer up for the first time the Sacrifice of the Mass. Seated at table with His loved Apostles about Him—we may hope that Judas has gone out—our Blessed Saviour recalls to mind His words: "If I be lifted up, I will draw all things unto Me," and as He makes the sign of the cross the first Mass has begun. He can confess no sin of His own as His priests do when they bow like Him before the Father, for He is sinless. But with what sorrow He can confess our sins; "for the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Never was human heart bruised and crushed by sorrow as was the Sacred Heart that night. David's sorrow for sin was deep and he has left the touching record of it in his Psalms. Mary Magdalene, as she knelt at the Master's feet in Galilee and watered them with her tears and dried them with the hair of her head, loved much and grieved for her sins, but no mere human heart ever felt the weight of sin as did our Blessed Lord that night at the altar in the supper-chamber. As He raises His tear-tained eyes to Heaven we seem to hear Him murmur: "I will go into the

mountains of God." Perhaps He makes the sign of the cross, as the priest at the Introit of the Mass, and says: "Thou hast fed Thy people with food of angels, having in it all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste."

Listen as our Lord tells the story of His life to His loved ones, and reminds them of the three happy years they have spent together, of His long sojourn at Nazareth, of His years of exile beyond the desert and over the Nile, and of the first Christmas night yonder on the slopes of Bethlehem, when so great was the joy of the heavenly army that there was an outburst of celestial music and the angels sang "Glory be to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will," and the first "Gloria" of the Mass is chanted by the true High Priest. But who can tell the fulness and the fervor of the prayer which next rises from the Heart of the Son of God offering up His first Mass to His Father? If the poor human heart of God's minister, stained as it is, can experience at the altar such transports, what must have been the warmth of our Lord's prayer that night? How it must have pierced the heavens and reached the throne of God! And no doubt the effect of that prayer will never die.

Then we seem to hear Him tell His Apostles how centuries ago their fathers had crossed the Red Sea and were starving in the desert. Looking back to Egypt, which they had left,

they found themselves perishing of hunger. Loudly they murmured, as was their wont, against Moses; loudly they clamored to be taken back to the land of slavery, where at least they would have food and not die of starvation. But when the sun was setting over the sand, Moses said to the people: "Fear not, the God of Israel feeds the birds of the air and He will feed you, His people, whom He has brought from the land of bondage. Go to your tents and rest to-night and on the morn you shall see what the Lord will do." "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 'In the morning you shall have your fill of bread; and you shall know that I am the Lord, your God.'"

"And in the morning a dew lay round about the camp . . . . like unto the hoar-frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it they said one to another: Manhu! which signifieth: What is this? for they knew not what it was. And Moses said to them: 'This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.'" During all the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert, whether they marched to the north or south, whether they encamped on the rocky plain or among the hills, whether they fought their enemies and won or were defeated, every morning at the dawn God fed his people on the bread from heaven. "And the children of Israel ate manna forty years till they came to a habitable land: with this meat were they fed,

until they reached the borders of the land of Canaan." This may have been the Epistle applied by our Lord to the manna of the New Law.

And for the Gospel of His first Mass our Blessed Saviour may remind His Apostles of the scene by the lakeshore when all day long the people had followed Him and listened to His voice and looked up into His face. That day so entrancing was His preaching that they forgot their bodily needs and sat and drank in the words that fell from His lips. When the sun was dropping down behind the western hills of Galilee and was flinging the shadows over the lake, and the short twilight was coming on, He, who forgets not even the least of His creatures, said that He could not send the people away hungry lest they should faint by the wayside. So that evening He multiplied the loaves and fed the five thousand men in the desert place on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The next day after His night of prayer on the mountain-top, when He had crossed the lake in the night and quieted the storm, the people once more crowded about Him outside of Capharnaum. Then it was that He made the great promise which He is now about to fulfil; then it was that He who is the Word of the Father pledged His word, and to-night with deepest love He will redeem that pledge. "I am the Bread of Life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert and are dead. This is the Bread which cometh

down from Heaven, that if any man eat of It he may not die. I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven. If any man eat of this Bread he shall live forever; and the Bread that I will give is My Flesh for the life of the world." With these marvels and these words in mind the Apostles find it easy to make anew the act of faith which lately Martha made in answer to His words: "I am the Resurrection and the Life." "Do you believe that I am the Bread of Life? Do you believe that My Flesh is meat indeed and My Blood is drink indeed?" He seems to say in sweet unspoken accents heard only by the hearts of the kneeling group of Apostles. And those faithful hearts answer with one voice: "We believe, dear Master, help Thou our unbelief." And thus the *Credo* of the Mass is said.

So far every rite and ceremony has been a preparation for the great mystery. Now the Offertory begins. The High Priest of the New Law takes bread into His sacred hands and lifting His eyes to Heaven, giving thanks, He blesses; then lifting the chalice, He offers it to the Father and blesses the wine. His Sacred Heart echoes the holy words which His priests utter daily at the same part of the Mass: "In a humble spirit and a contrite heart let us be accepted; so let our sacrifice be made in Thy sight this day that it may please Thee." Noe had offered sacrifice when he came out from the ark;

Abraham on Mount Moriah; Melchisedech had offered bread and wine, but no oblation sent up to Heaven by patriarch or priest found such acceptance with the Father, gave the Father such honor, such thanksgiving, such praise. Now that the Offertory is concluded our Blessed Saviour's Heart, filled with warmest affections and deepest love, cannot restrain His transports, and His lips chant a hymn of praise and thus we have the Preface of the first Mass of the New Law. Bowing over, with the tears streaming down His cheeks, our hearts hear Him say in accents of loving tenderness and reverence: "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of Hosts. Full are the heavens and the earth of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!"

The solemn moment of the Consecration has arrived. The angels bent in wondering adoration at that silent instant before the creation of the earth when God said: "Let there be light." Abraham, on Mount Moriah, raising the knife to slay his son Isaac was mute with wonder and reverence. Elias at the foot of Carmel called down fire from heaven on the victims of his sacrifice, then waited in silence and unfaltering faith. Deeper than all this silence were the awe and reverence brooding over the souls of Mary and the kneeling Apostles as our Lord "took bread into His sacred hands and blessing, broke and

gave to them, and said: 'Take ye. This is My Body.'"

Quicker than lightning's flash leaps up from Mary's heart an act of faith stronger than the united faith of all loyal angels and all saints of God, who join the Mother's worship and adoring sing: "Come let us adore and fall down; for He is the Lord our God." "This is My Body," He had whispered and these creative words have placed under the form of wheaten bread the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Mary's Son; the Body of the Child who thirty-three years ago shivered under the cold winds, on the altar-crib in Bethlehem; of the Child that was carried in His Mother's arms over the rough desert, as with hurrying feet, she fled by night from heartless Herod; of the Boy who spent in quiet Nazareth His up-growing years with Mary and Joseph; of the Man who preached by the lake, calmed the winds and the waves, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf and healing to the sick; of the Man who bade the children come unto Him, who comforted and strengthened sad, drooping and timid hearts; of the Man over whose lips had flowed words of grace and wisdom and love such as have since never found utterance on human tongue.

"This is My Body which in a few hours weakened and languishing will lie in its own Blood under the olive trees; My Body which to-morrow will be lashed by the biting whips, dug with nails and pierced by the spear, will

hang lifeless on the cross. This is My Body which, before the set of the sun on the Passover, my dear broken-hearted Mother will lay away in the cradle of the tomb, with even deeper love than she placed Me thirty-three years ago in the manger at Bethlehem."

"And having taken the chalice . . . . He said to them: 'This is My Blood of the New Testament which shall be shed for many.'" It was blood upon the door-posts of the Israelites in Egypt that saved them at night when the angel of the Lord passed over the land. "And the blood shall be unto you for a sign in the houses where you shall be: and I shall see the blood, and shall pass over you: and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I shall strike the land of Egypt." So the plague of sin is averted, and freedom from its slavery obtained by the Blood of the Lamb, slain from the beginning of the world. On the morrow the Blood of "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world" will be poured out even to the last drop, outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem. That Blood, as if too impatient to wait for the nails and spear of Good Friday, is shed to-night and the wine in the chalice, at the Master's words, turns to blood. "This is My Blood," He murmurs, His Heart aglow with the fire of love; "My Blood which was shed years ago when I was a child in My Mother's Arms, when I, who am from the eternal years, was only eight days born and

yet I had been begotten from eternity; My Blood which crimsoned the lips and face that Mary kissed in love and trembling awe, that to-night, eager to pour its life away, will, under the moon-lit olive trees in the garden, burst from My veins, dye My garments and glisten with ruby brightness on the ground." This Blood to-morrow will be mingled with the dust in the streets of the city of Sion, redden the marble pavement of the courtyard, be trampled under the feet of angry men, and at eve be hardening about the nails and on the sacred side, under the chilly, bleak wind which blows over the hill of life and death. Mary, poor heart-broken Mary, will see it all as now she sees that Blood in the chalice where a moment before was the purple juice of the vine. The Consecration of the first Mass of the New Law said by the great High Priest is finished.

Our Lord will then bow as the priest at Mass, and beg the Heavenly Father to look down upon His sacrifice with more satisfaction than He regarded the offering of Abel, or the sacrifice of Abraham on Mount Moriah, or even the bread and wine of Melchisedech. The holy angels in countless myriads will bring to the throne of God at our Blessed Saviour's request the sweet incense of the great oblation of the New Law. In the days of the Machabees, Judas in the midst of his struggles did not forget those who were slain, who had given their lives for their country's

honor and welfare. So he sent offerings to the Temple that prayers and sacrifices should be offered for the dead "because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness had great grace laid up for them. It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from sins." Remembering this history, our Lord may speak of the souls of the patriarchs and prophets and of all the exiles in Limbo, yearning for His coming, and thus we shall have the Memento for the dead. What must be the efficacy of the sacrifice of Holy Thursday night for those who have fought the spiritual battles, if the offerings in the Temple of Jerusalem were of advantage to the spirits of the brave men who died on the hills of Judea defending their native land?

The Apostles and the Jews who thronged about Him have not yet forgotten how He taught them to lift up their dull leaden souls to the Heavenly Father in prayer. It was on a calm, quiet day in early spring when He stood on one of the hills which overlooked the lake. The faces of those who had followed Him were upturned to His, their eyes were riveted upon Him and they were listening to every word which fell from His lips. "When you pray," He had said, "when you raise your thoughts from earth to heaven, thus shall you pray: 'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, etc.,'" and for the first time

that great prayer fell upon the ears of men, fell from the lips of Him who was infallible truth. Now once again the same petitions in a fuller form are offered to the Father in the great High-priestly prayer of Jesus, and ever since over every Catholic altar daily at the great Sacrifice the best of all prayers has been said over the Body and Blood of the Master who first taught us how to pray.

They remember, too, the testimony of the Baptist, three years ago, when our Lord came out from the forty days of fasting in the desert. The scene was below Jericho on the banks of the Jordan. There the Baptist was preaching and baptizing, and his disciples, John and Andrew, were with him. Our Lord, thin and emaciated, came from the solitude of the caves in the arid hills which overlooked the Dead Sea. His fast had been long, His prayer continual, and now He appears on the banks of the river about to go to Galilee to begin His public ministry. The Baptist sees Him approaching, and "beholding Jesus walking, he saith: 'Behold the Lamb of God'! And the two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus." How vivid and consoling now in the minds and hearts of Andrew and John the memory of that blessed day which they spent with the Master! And how it all comes back to them as our Lord holds up to their adoring eyes the Sacred Host. "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world." For this

He had come into the world; for this He had shed His Blood that night in the chalice; this was the motive which was to well up in His Heart at the slaying of the Lamb on the morrow.

The Mass is hurrying on towards Communion. To prepare His Apostles, our Lord, with a look of divine sweetness in His eyes, expressing in some faint manner the warm love of His Sacred Heart, speaks to them in words sweeter than any earthly music that has ever fallen upon human ear, in tones more gentle than any words that in all the years at Nazareth had ever crossed even His Mother's lips. Stirred by His words and His grace, the Apostles remember the day when together with Him they entered into Capharnaum, and there came to Him the centurion beseeching Him saying: "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy and is grievously tormented." And He said: "I will come and heal him." And the centurion making answer said: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; but only say the word and my servant shall be healed." And the echo of that beautiful act of humility sounds in their hearts as clearly as it daily sounds from the lips of their successors who at dawn renew the mystic Sacrifice.

Then taking the Sacred Host in His hands, raising His eyes that are filled with tears, and making the sign of the cross and murmuring the loving words: "With desire I have

desired to eat this pasch with you," He will give Himself to each with His own hands. Was there ever such a Communion as that of the kneeling Apostles and the Blessed Mother! The High Priest gives His Body and Blood to His priests that they may shed their blood for Him one day. And all will lay down their lives for Him save John, who is closest to His Heart. He must live on, far on into years, and the strength in old age will come to him, from the thought of that holy night, to bear cheerfully the disappointment of not being permitted to give the greatest testimony of love—the laying down of his life.

But how can we picture Mary at that Holy Mass? The first Communion day of His Mother is the First-Mass day of her Son. Thirty-three years ago at her home at Nazareth she had given Him her own flesh and blood that He might dwell among the children of men and come at last to this hour and to the awful sacrifice of the morrow. Now that Son gives back that Body and Blood to His Mother. She will need all the strength and courage that comes from It to be brave on the morrow and to stand alone during all the coming days of loneliness and solitude when He is gone and when the Infant Church will need her. Just as in the dark days of suffering and fear when a Child at Bethlehem and Egypt He needed her, so the Church, His mystical Body,

in the days of childhood will require Mary, His Mother. No doubt the angels are chanting in the Cenacle that night the salutation of Gabriel: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." Mary is immeasurably fuller of grace now than she was at Nazareth. The Blessed Fruit of her womb, Jesus, is with her in a more marvelous manner, and as she has been growing in grace all these years her love is inexpressibly greater. How cold our hearts in Holy Communion! How tepid our love! Let us draw near Mary on this holy night and she will aid us to be grateful for so great a gift, thankful for so rich a blessing. We shall learn to say with her as we come from the altar: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

Here may be recited Psalm 22.

II.

The Lord hath sworn and He will not repent: Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech. Ps. 109:4.

WE must still linger near the altar in the Cenacle, and gaze upon that scene so dear to the Sacred Heart, the ordination of the first priests of the New Law. The Apostles, after their first Holy Communion are bowed in humble adoration and their hearts are filled with wonder at the greatness of the gift. "Whence is this," each murmurs, "that my Lord should come to me?"

Only a short week ago, down near the Jordan when our Lord was passing up towards Jericho, He had said: "Zacheus, make haste, and come down: for to-day I must abide in thy house." And he made haste and came down and received Him with joy. What, then, must have been the Apostles' welcome to so loved a guest? No doubt, during the three years of His ministry just ended, they had received Him with joy after His nights of prayer in the mountains where He was wont to go, but they had never welcomed Him with such love as they did on that Holy Thursday night, when He came to be the guest of

their souls. On the coming Easter evening at Emmaus He will hear from Cleophas and his companion the words of gentle constraint; "Stay with us, because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent." This same prayer will be in the hearts and on the lips of the chosen ones that night in the supper-chamber. How often, too, in all the coming years of stress and trial they will beg Him to remain with them to make their hearts brave and their wills strong!

What better petition can we use after Communion than this same prayer? When the night is dark, and we feel far from home, "Tarry with us, O Lord, and give us light," must be our cry. When we are weak and cowardly in the strife: "Abide with me, O Lord, and make me strong and brave." "Tarry with us, O Lord, in our senses and our bodies, in our souls and our powers, that they may ever be used in Thy holy service. Stay with us in our joys and pleasures, that they may be ever pure and draw us to Thee; in our sorrows, that we may unite them with Thine. Tarry with us in time by Thy grace, that we may merit to abide with Thee in eternity in Thy glory and see Thee face to face." Why can we not speak with Him thus in Holy Communion or in our visits to His Sacramental Presence? He is our Emmanuel, God with us. Were our hearts pure and unsullied, there would be no difficulty; for the clean of heart see Him.

When the Communion is over the High Priest rises and stands before His kneeling Apostles. He prays to the Eternal Father, and then stretching forth His hands, He places them lovingly upon the head of each of His chosen ones, saying: "Do this in remembrance of Me," and in virtue of these words they are priests of the New Dispensation. Those sacred hands had wrought many miracles, but never such a marvel as that. They had been placed upon the heads of the little ones up in Galilee, and graces had flowed from that holy touch into the innocent souls of the children. They had rested upon the head of the weeping Magdalene, and all stain and blemish of sin had vanished. The lepers had come to His feet, and the touch of His holy hand had been their healing. When the poor blind Bartimæus called out to Him as He "was passing by," power went out from His blessed hands, and the blind man looked for the first time into the faces of those he loved and gazed out upon God's beautiful world. The eyes of his spirit, too, were opened to the marvels and truths of the spiritual world. From those sacred hands, which years ago were twined about His Mother's neck, and which to-morrow will be manacled and pierced by the nails, are flowing to-night blessings such as had never passed from them before. When Abraham put forth his hand and took the sword to sacrifice his son, the angel said to him: "Lay not thy hand upon the boy,

neither do thou anything to him: now I know that thou fearest God and hast not spared thy only begotten son for My sake." So now the Only Begotten of the Father will raise His hands above the heads of His Apostles and they shall receive power to slay the Lamb of God, not only on Mount Moriah, but upon every Catholic altar even to the end of time. For from this hour, "from the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same . . . and in every place there is sacrifice and there is offered a clean oblation," because, by the touch of those sacred hands, His Apostles have been made priests of the New Law, according to the order of Melchisedech.

With what raptures of holy ecstasy Mary will contemplate the great mystery which is going on under her eyes! She will perhaps hear her Divine Son saying to His Apostles: "I will establish them and multiply them, and will set My Sanctuary in the midst of them forever. And My Tabernacle shall be with them, and I will be their God and they shall be My people." What a strangely wondrous power He is conferring on these simple, frail men! Only a little while ago they were poor, unlettered, rough fishermen, who toiled nightly on the Lake of Galilee. One day the Master called and promised to make them "fishers of men." Now He is investing them with the divine power that will enable them to fulfil that exalted mission. In some respects the gift bestowed on them that night will be

greater even than Mary's sublime privilege. She gave birth to her Child only once and in one place—the hillside cave at Bethlehem; after this night His priests shall go forth and with a creative power, give to Mary's Son His Eucharistic life upon the altar. From that hour His priests, down the ages till the end of time, have a power over Him such as His Mother never possessed. In virtue of the words: "Do this in remembrance of Me," He lays upon them a command which enables them to place Him in the mystery of His love on ten hundred times ten thousand altars for the worship and the feeding of His people. A year ago by the lake-shore He fed, after they had followed Him all day, five thousand people, lest they should faint by the wayside. Now His priests, wielding a power which neither golden crown or royal sceptre can give, will feed "a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues."

Great was the providence of God for the Israelites when they left Egypt and journeyed through the desert. As they marched under the leadership of Moses to the north and to the south, or under the shadows of Sinai or Horeb, or along the rolling plain, where it is fringed by the forests of the hill country, God watched over them. "And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, till they came to a habitable land: with this meat they were fed, until they reached the borders of Cha-

naan." How much greater the love of the Sacred Heart when He told His Apostles: "Do this in remembrance of Me"! On every Catholic altar the world over—it may be an altar incense-wreathed under the dome of some grand cathedral, or it may be a low pine table in some hut or cavern of the rugged mountain—but on every altar is multiplied the Bread which lives and makes us live, the Bread which nourishes the poor famishing souls of men; the Bread of which we can say: "Thou didst feed Thy people with the food of angels, and gavest them Bread prepared without labor, having in it all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste." It is St. Augustine who exclaims: "Oh, wonderful power of the priest, in whose hands the Son of God becomes incarnate, as He became incarnate in the womb of His Virgin Mother!"

Great was the power of Moses when he scourged Egypt with the ten plagues which swept over it. Great was his power when he struck the Red Sea and the waters divided and he led the Israelites dryshod to the desert beyond. Great was the power of Josue when the walls of Jericho fell at the blast from his soldiers' trumpets and the sun stood still at his bidding. Great was the power of Elias when at his prayer the fire came down from heaven and burnt his sacrifices upon Mount Carmel; but these wonders which God wrought for His chosen people are dwarfed and dwindle into insignificance in the presence

of the stupendous reality of the miracle of miracles which takes place in the great sacrifice of the Mass. Upon this sacrifice the sun never sets and the whole earth has become its altar. The Lamb slain from the beginning of the world is at the disposal of the priest, for: "Behold, I am in your hands: do with Me what is good and right in your eyes." For the priest shall offer every day "for a holocaust to the Lord, a Lamb of the same year without blemish. . . . He shall offer it always in the morning . . . morning by morning an everlasting holocaust. The slain of the Lord shall be . . . from one end of the earth even to the other end thereof." All this and more than human tongue can tell or created mind imagine was in the intention of the Heart of our Blessed Saviour as He placed His hands upon the bowed heads of His Apostles and bade them the night before He died: "Do this in memory of Me."

And now the first Holy Mass was near its close. The sacrifice of Calvary has been offered up before the ninth hour of Good Friday. The Lamb of God has been slain and the Blood has flowed into the chalice. The Victim has been lifted up which is to draw all hearts unto It. That Victim has given Himself to His little flock and enjoined upon them to offer the same oblation till He come. Then, "when they had said a hymn they went forth." The High Priest was on His way to the bloody sacrifice. One day up in Galilee

along the lake, He multiplied the loaves and fed the people who had followed Him regardless of their physical needs. On the morrow, outside of Capharnaum, when they thronged about Him once more and listened to the music of His voice, He promised them the great gift of His Body and His Blood for the nourishing of their souls. "I am the Bread of Life," He said. "Amen, amen, I say unto you: Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you." After this, many of His Disciples went back and walked no more with Him. How sad their after-life must have been! How can there be aught of joy in the life of any man who, once having walked with Christ, walks with Him no more? How dreary and how lonely such a life must be! Is the same not true to a certain extent in our own lives? We have frequently knelt at the altar and have obeyed the command: "Do this in remembrance of Me," and we have eaten of the "Bread of the strong"; but we have gone away and we have not walked with Him who came to us. We have gone away without saying deep down in our hearts the hymn of thanksgiving. We have not begged Him who died to come to us "to stay with us, because it is towards evening and the day is far spent." Back to our duties and our toils have we gone, forgetting in the trials of the day that we dined with the Master at the dawn and that in the strength of that food we can

walk up unto the mountain of God. We must not be like the faithless ones whom He fed by the lake and to whom He gave the great promise; but rather realizing the gift more clearly and dining with Him daily, the memory of His kindness will linger with us always to make us strong and brave in His service. We will remember that when the hymn was said, when their first Holy Communion was over and they were His priests forever, then He led them out to the Mount of Olives. There they did not see His face shining with the brightness of the glory of Thabor and His garments white as snow. But they saw Him in the sorrows of the garden, with His face bathed with sweat and tears and His garments dyed with blood. In our lives, too, we must remember that Holy Communion ought to be our daily and familiar bread. It is not and never was intended by our Lord to be a luxury, but a plain necessity of our spiritual life. It is intended to give us strength to fight His battles, irrespective of our weaknesses, and to aid us that we may not turn our backs upon, but daily walk closer to Him and be faithful to the end.

Here may be recited Psalm 65.

MOUNT CALVARY

Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends. ST. JOHN 15:13.

THE eve of the beautiful feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross falls within the octave of our Lady's birthday. So in the Church's mind, the shadows of Calvary hang over the cradle of the Mother.

Our chapel is quiet. The ruby light in the sanctuary lamp is dancing as if with joy in His presence. Without the embowering leaves seem to be struggling at the window to enter in and visit Him in His Tabernacle home. How bright they are in their early autumn garb, as if filled with joy to die for Him as summer fades away!

Will His thoughts, as He waits and watches in the altar-prison, ever go back through the long vista of the years to the days of Constantine? To the time when the cross flashed out in the noon-day sky more brilliant than the sun, and to the command "In this sign thou shalt conquer," which bade the brave leader march to victory? Though the emperor's soldiers were stout of arm and loyal of heart, though they looked with confidence into the face of their general, yet their spirits grew in enthusiasm as they read God's promise

of victory in those golden letters above the cross in the blue heaven. Could we but read that sign above the crosses in our lives, what victories would follow our efforts and crown our struggles! In our depression and sadness He bids us fight, and if we obey how soon we shall experience the joy of the soldier's victory after the struggle! In our failures if we struggle on unflinchingly for His love, then in God's eyes we shall win many a glorious triumph. What a victory, too, it will be: the greatest of all conquests—the vanquishing of self! And often also the winning of many souls for Him.

On Palm Sunday the children had come out cheering in His honor, "Hosanna, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel." In the midst of the waving olive branches, and the enthusiasm of the multitude, and the sound of the voices of the little ones, He cried out from the porch of the Temple, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, shall draw all things to Myself." He knew that in five short days these shouts that now echoed His name in triumph through the colonnades of the Temple, would ring louder for His Blood upon the hill of shame. How His Sacred Heart yearned for that Good Friday, for the cross, for Calvary! How He loved the skull-shaped Golgotha stained with His blood! For three and thirty years the thought of it was in His mind. In His Mother's womb, as she hurried into the hill

country, or trod Jerusalem's streets, as the first Christmas approached, and Mary passed near Golgotha on her way to Bethlehem, the yearning for Calvary was in His Sacred Heart. When He lived as a child in far-off Egypt under the shadow of the pyramids, He would trace, as a child, the figure of the cross in the sands. Up in hilly Galilee as He hardened His hands with toil, they say, at times He laid the beams of wood in the form of a cross, and the prayerful Joseph wondered. Later in His public life when going up to Jerusalem with His disciples, the same vision of the hill "outside the wall" must have been with Him, for He said to them: "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death. And shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to be mocked, and scourged and crucified."

Another day when the people thronged about Him in great numbers—how could they help it, all hearts went out to Him—He said to them: "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." The place of that baptism was Golgotha. And Mary, His Mother, was at the ceremony; Magdalene, too, that never-dying trophy of penitent love winning pardon, was there; and John, also, stood at the foot of the cross, to receive unto his own and to guard so lovingly the childless, broken-hearted Mother, when her Son

lay dead among the people. The poor dying thief was on that holy mount drawn towards the Sacred Heart, and as he hung expiring upon the cross of ignominy, an outcast from his people, perhaps his own mother ashamed of him, a condemned malefactor, a life of sin closing by a death of shame, Jesus had for him only words of mercy and love, and a promise of unending glory. Can we wonder then that the thought and memory of such acts of divine compassion should have made the heights of Golgotha dear to His Sacred Heart?

When timid Nicodemus stole to see our Blessed Lord by night, perhaps in the silent grove under the olive trees of Gethsemani, with what pathos the Master must have whispered, more quietly than the olive and fig-trees were whispering in the moonlit garden, the prophecy which tells of His love for Calvary! How gently He must have told that faint-hearted disciple, who later on was to be so brave, the future triumph on the blood-marked hill. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up," the dear Master said. The Israelites had sinned, when, marching from Mount Seir, they had murmured against Moses, God's leader of the people, and the fiery serpents had stung and killed many of them. But Moses lifted up the brazen serpent, our Lord told Nicodemus, and to gaze on it was the healing of the nation. Did our

Saviour, looking down the ages into our hearts, more cowardly at times, perhaps, than the fear-stricken Nicodemus, who sought the Master in the darkness, see us timid, weak, and little-minded? Did He bid us "lift our eyes to the mountain whence cometh help"? Did He wish to teach us to lift our eyes to the mountain which He loved, and which He was to consecrate, not with holy unction of sacred oil, but with the anointing of His Precious Blood? In joy we lift our eyes to Thabor, and our joy is purified. In sorrow at the sin-stained past, in dread at the judgment to come, we lift our hearts to Calvary, the mount of pardon and forgiveness, where by the shedding of blood the hand-writing against us has been blotted out.

Few of us can go in person to Golgotha. Few of us can cross the seas, and disembarking at Joppa make our way with pious pilgrims and kneel on Calvary. What a joy were such a pilgrimage ours! How the memory of it would linger with us all our years! We would pass the story of that journey on through our lives to our children's children. What a joy to kneel on the holy mount loved by the Sacred Heart and tinged with His blood!

Yet are not our altars a virtual Golgotha, a real Calvary? There, day by day, behind the gilded doors of our Tabernacles, and hidden under the sacramental veil, as on Calvary's height He was hidden by His wounds, His

bruises and His Blood, the Master dies for love of us. There daily in the anointed hands of the priest He is lifted up at the tinkling of the bell; lifted up amid smoke of fragrant incense in consoling benediction, and the sight of Him, which is only the beatific vision veiled, is the healing and the strengthening of our souls.

Had we been on Calvary's height as He hung dying on the cross, who of us had taken part with His enemies to insult and revile Him? We know we should have been close to His Blessed Mother to console and sympathize with Him in His sufferings and His pain. Like the brave Clovis of old, our hearts tell us and tell us truly, that we should have yearned to be there to protect and defend Him. Yet we need not regret our absence from that death of shame; we need not grieve that we cannot see the sun rise over Moab's heights and light up the narrow streets of Jerusalem, and glint on the roof of the church which covers the rock where stood His cross, for at the sunrise we can lift our eyes to the altar, where the light of faith will show us these same mysteries enacted. The mystery, greater than the change which took place on Thabor where He was transfigured, and Peter exclaimed, "It is good for us to be here," is daily repeated. And we, too, feel how good it is to be there. The blood-shedding which happened on Golgotha so long ago, is renewed in every clime, from the rising to the setting of the

sun, on ten thousand Golgothas, when at the sacred words of consecration the blood flows again into the chalice on ten thousand altars. Let us lift our eyes then to the holy mount which Jesus loves, whence cometh help! In darkness there comes light like the column of fire which led the Israelites on by night through the desert. In weakness there comes strength, like that which came to Elias when in the strength of the bread which the angel gave he walked unto the very mountain of God. In cowardice there will come courage, for we know on the altar is our Leader. "The Lord thy God is thy Leader, and will not leave thee nor forsake thee." In sorrow He is there on the altar to lift the burden from our spirit and the weight from off our hearts, as in days so long ago He consoled the widow of Naim when her only son was borne dead out from the city's gate, or as He dried the tears of Mary and Martha and bade their brother, whom He loved, come forth to new life from the tomb. In every joy then and sorrow, let us lift our eyes to the mount of the altar, where He dies daily for us, and He will teach us to live for Him by dying every day to ourselves.

Here may be recited Psalm 21.

THE HILLS STAINED WITH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to take the Book, and to open the Seals thereof: because Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, in Thy Blood, out of every tribe, and tongue and people and nation.
APOC. 5:9.

IT was the Feast of the Precious Blood in the month of July. The light flickering through the sanctuary lamp gave a reddish tinge to the dimly lighted chapel, reminding one that the Master in the Tabernacle loved the crimson hue, for He had shed His red Blood to win our hearts. Our Master's home is poor, but He will not mind; it is our best, and our best, no matter how poor and lowly, is always grateful to Him. Our chapel is richer than His cave-stable in the hills of Juda, yet how He loved it, His first home!

The roses on the altar are blushing in His presence. They know full well, even with all their beauty and perfume, they are not worthy to die for Him, so near His Tabernacle. The petals are dropping like silent tears on the altar-cloth where He will be born to-morrow at the dawn. One by one the red leaves fall and the roses die, but in their death there is

no blood-shedding, while when He died for us, the Blood ran down even unto the last red drop from the five big crimson wounds.

The altar cover, too, in our little chapel is red with beautiful flowers embroidered on its border by loving hands. What deft fingers, made skilful by warm love, wrought them, I know not, but He knows who dwells behind the Tabernacle door and knows all things. Does the red cover remind Him of the seamless robe which, when put on after the scourging, blushed blood red at the sufferings and shame of its Master? When Mary made that robe so long ago in quiet Nazareth in hilly Galilee, it was white; they say it grew with His growth. Now it is red, not from the costly dyes of the distant East, but red, for it has been dyed with blood, when, with bruised feet and aching heart, He trod the wine-press.

How often He shed that blood before the sad, but for us happy, day, when it trickled in red drops out from the big wound in His Sacred Heart! Yet all the years from childhood He was longing for this crimson baptism.

Just after His first birthday, when hardly warm—for the bleak winds blew cold over the Judean hills, through the chinks in the wall of His stable home, the night He was born—His Mother had Him circumcised. As yet He had no name. By what sweet title did Mary call her Child? He was only eight days old, yet He was born endless ages and

everlasting years ago; He was in the Father's bosom before the angelic hosts fought that awful fight on the battlements of Heaven; now He is only a short week and a day old, and He is to receive a name marked with His Blood. Jesus is the name. It has been brought from Heaven and means Saviour; but a Saviour He can only be when the blood flows from the five pledges of His love. He could not wait for the moon-lit night under the olive trees, nor for the dark afternoon on the skull-shaped hill of Golgotha. Strange He had waited eternal years, and now He cannot wait for thirty-three. Oh! those three and thirty years, how leaden-footed and heavy they are! How they linger in their course! How slowly they move by, because He would shed His Blood! He will not wait. He will take His name in blood, and His Mother's heart will not fail to bleed.

All those years Mary saw that blood on His sacred lips, lips that were later on to speak such words of melting love to all who would come to Him and listen. Those same lips speak to us from out the Tabernacle, not in words audible to human ear, but in words that our hearts cannot fail to catch. His Mother saw the blood in His bright red cheek—that cheek which the mailed hand of the rough soldier was to strike. Perhaps that hand was tinged with the blood of Mary's Child. Do we ever make His cheeks red by an indelicacy or a rudeness towards Him or towards those

He loves, and who is it He does not love? Why, He loves even me, who have been kneeling here, this all too short hour, and to-morrow His blood will sparkle in the chalice on the altar where it flows each day for me. The three and thirty years are dying; they have been slow in growing old and are at last on the verge of the grave. Jesus, too, who all these years has been waiting so patiently, stands looking into the cold and silent tomb. Ere a few hours, He will be wrapped in the stillness of death with the red marks and bruises upon His Body. He has just come over the mountains from Bethany, which shall see and welcome Him no more. Bethany had been His happy resting-place. What a warm welcome ever awaited Him in that holy house! Yet how much more willingly He would tarry in our hearts!

The Master has come from the supper-room, the upper-chamber, "large and wide and well furnished," as our hearts should be when we dine with Him. In the Cenacle His Blood has flowed for the first time into the chalice. Who can count the times it has flowed since? At the foot of Olivet His Sacred Heart forces the red Blood through the pores of His Body till it trickles to the ground. How impatient that Heart has become! In a few hours every drop shall have been poured out.

The moon is full and round and clear in the sky to-night; it is the Passover moon. Its rays steal through the branches and the

leaves of the olive trees and oh, the horror of the sight! He is covered with blood. It is on His face, on His robe, on His hands; it has flowed down on the ground and red ruby drops glint in the silver light.

"Enough of blood-letting, dear Jesus. Let the world stand redeemed and man's sins pardoned. What need to shed it on the morrow? Why dye the leathern lashes red? No need to mingle the red drops with the dust of Jerusalem's streets. Your ears must not be offended by that awful cry which will strike the hills of Olivet and be re-echoed back through the Temple porches and marble colonnades: 'His blood be upon us and upon our children.'" With blood-stained hands uplifted, He whispers: "O Father, let My Heart be drained to the last drop to win the souls of men and show them My love."

On the morrow, before the sun was halfway down the slope of the heavens towards the western hills, His prayer is fulfilled. Blood has reddened the marble pavement of the Pretorium and saturated the whips and scourges which tore so cruelly His sacred flesh; blood has been spilled in the streets of Jerusalem and on the terraces of the Tyropœon valley. Now the earthquake is over.

In the dimness of the growing light, blood can be seen trickling down the poor, bruised body. Some drops have fallen on Mary's mantle. Some may have been scattered on the good thief and won him, in his dying hour,

mercy and salvation. The cold, chill winds, blowing over the hill of shame, are causing the blood to harden about the wounds in hands and feet. Now He bows the head, looks love into His Mother's eyes and expires. The Sacred Heart stops pulsing and the blood ceases to flow. But it will flow again. The few remaining drops in His Heart clamor for escape. The rough spear crushing His side will find them, and with joy they will leap forth to the light. And it was all shed for me. "I gave it all," He whispers from His tabernacle home. Do we give Him all? Let us not be ungenerous in our service and stingy in our gifts to Him who gave us so lavishly His blood, His life. At the dawn of to-morrow He will pour it again into the holy cup with loving eagerness. Oh! the joy to Him, if we would come and drink. If we drink that blood we shall never die, though He died in the shedding.

Here may be recited Psalm 93.

THE MOUNT OF THE SEPULCHRE

He is risen; He is not here. ST. MARK 16:6.

THE Blessed Body, all mangled and bruised, had been laid away tenderly by the Mother of Sorrows in the cold, rocky vault. Gently had she placed that cruelly pierced head on its stone pillow, as if the happy days of Bethlehem had come back to her again. But thirty-three years ago on that first Christmas night the infant eyes so like her own smiled back their thanks for her loving care; now those eyes are closed in death. Then she could see the heaving of the little breast and feel the throbbing of the Sacred Heart; but now that bosom is quiet and motionless and the Sacred Heart, rent by the spear, beats no more. Then, in the cave on Bethlehem's ridge, as her Child sank to rest, she could kiss His tiny lips ruby with the Precious Blood; now in the death-cave in Calvary's side those lips are bloodless and white and from off them she has washed the blood and the dust of the much-trodden streets of Jerusalem.

Strange glory this which hovers above the tomb! How could there be glory after such shame? How could there be light after such darkness? There was a darkness in Egypt

when the Lord said to Moses: "Stretch out thy hand towards heaven: and may there be darkness upon the land of Egypt, so thick that it may be felt." There was darkness over Sodom and Gomorrah when God "destroyed these cities, and all the country about, and the inhabitants of the cities and all things that spring from the earth." At His death night seemed to have fallen upon the earth: "And it was about the sixth hour: and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened." But this hiding of the sun was as noon-day splendor compared to the desolation which swept over the Mother's soul and reigned in that tomb when the childless Mother took farewell of her murdered Son. Surely there can be no dawn after such a night; no joy will ever spring through such sorrow; no strength after such weakness. Are smiles possible when tears of blood have been shed? Victory and triumph cannot follow such a defeat and such dishonor. There can be no life where death has been so complete, so cruel.

Yet our Lord Himself, only a week before He died, had said from the steps of the Temple: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself." And on another occasion He had proclaimed His intention of destroying the temple of His Body and in three days rebuilding it. But when the sun dropped behind the Judean hills on that awful Good Friday there seemed no

indications that these prophecies would be fulfilled. There appeared no prospect of triumph and glory, but every evidence of defeat and shame.

Let us go, however, for a moment into the silent cities of the dead where the world's cherished ones lie buried; where the world's brightest, bravest and best find a last resting place. Tread softly and reverently over the green mounds under which repose only mouldering bones and hallowed dust. Delve beneath the grassy hillock of a pauper's grave. Draw back the bronze door creaking on its rusty hinges and guarding the cold, damp vault of wealth's favored ones. Dig deep down below the ground upon which have been erected the glittering marble shaft or the granite temple to the memory of the world's heroes; and grave and vault and tomb do one and all contain naught save scattered dust and crumbling bones. Upon humble slab, and stately column, and lofty mausoleum the same inscription is written, the same ending to the story of life is inscribed: "Here lies the body." No matter what thoughts their minds have conceived, their wills purposed and their hands executed, the ending of the last page of life's history is the same for all.

But at the first flush of dawn on Easter go into the garden and enter that tomb. In that open grave no scattered bones and no mouldering dust are found. Two of God's bright angels proclaim His epitaph and tell

the tale of His triumph and the glory of His victory: "He is risen, He is not here." The day did not break as bright over Moab's hills, nor was the effulgence at dawn in the eastern skies as beautiful as was Mary's Son rising from the dead. "This is the day which the Lord hath made, let us be glad and rejoice therein." But yesterday He lay bruised, mangled and dead among the people; to-day His wounds are healed and glow with Heaven's light, and He is alive with a life which shall taste death never more. "The stone which the builders rejected, this same is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing and it is wonderful in our eyes."

In the gray of the early morning the Roman soldiers are still keeping their watchful vigil at the tomb, so carefully sealed on Good Friday. All is still and quiet in the garden and as hushed as is the grave in which Mary's Son is sleeping. As yet the smoke from the sacrifice of the morning victims in the Temple has not begun to rise. The angels in countless legions are gathering in adoration about the sacred Body still wrapped in the grave-clothes with which Mary had lovingly swathed it. Thirty-three years ago, in Mary's bosom in Nazareth, the soul of our Blessed Lord had been united to His sacred Body and "the Word became Flesh." Now the years are over and that same hallowed Soul comes in triumph from Limbo, surrounded by those "prisoners of hope." By His power

as God and at the command of the Father, the Body and Soul are again united, and Mary's Son who was dead is alive again, to die no more.

Swifter than eagle's flight or lightning flash He bursts the rocky cavern and shines forth in all the glory of His risen life. That face which yesterday was covered with blood and disfigured, glows with the light that shone from it on Thabor and dims the glinting of the morning sunlight on the pillars and porches of the Temple. Those eyes which yesterday were filled with blood and dust sparkle now with the lustre of ten thousand sun-touched diamonds. The five crimson wounds through which His life-blood ebbed away are bright with radiance of ruby and garnet, and tell the story of His tender love, which ever is unchanged. The sunshine of the smooth, placid lake is beautiful; the smile on the child's sleeping face is joy to a mother's heart; the peace in the forest before break of dawn is deep; but there is in nature no beauty, no calmness like that look of love on Jesus' face when on Easter morning He comes back to us. It is the look that Mary may have seen on Christmas night at Bethlehem; the expression which perhaps was His during the prayerful years of toil at Nazareth; or maybe like the glow upon His countenance which Peter, James, and John saw on Thabor, or which the angels witnessed as He prayed at night on the mountain-top. It is the Divinity

Itself, hidden and obscured during the dark hours of the Passion, which now beams forth and flashes out with a radiance not of earth but of Heaven. How it fills our hearts with happiness to think of the joy which pulses in the Sacred Heart of our risen Lord! We are glad not on account of ourselves, but on account of the Master; for His pain and suffering are over and His triumph and glory have come at last. We are glad for His Mother's sweet sake. For from the tomb He will go to her and wipe away her tears. As she has been the first and deepest in His pains, so shall she be the first and deepest in His joy. She had sorrowed with Him with a mother's sorrow; so now she is glad with a mother's gladness.

"Christ rising from the dead dieth no more. Death no more shall have dominion over Him." Our Blessed Lord's resurrection is not only a fruitful cause of joy to us, but it is the model of our own quickening in the spiritual life. In Galilee, on that beautiful spring day when He hastened from the lake to the little city of Naim, he met the sad funeral procession as it came out from the town's gate. He saw with sympathetic heart the poor, desolate widow crushed at the loss of her son. That young man was the support of her declining years, her one hope this side of the grave. With him the light had gone out from her life and the smile from her face, for the staff upon which she leaned had been

broken and shattered. Our Lord bade the young man arise, and He gave him back to his mother, and once more she lived anew in his new life. But that boy was to taste of death again and once more he was to pass into the shadow.

On another occasion, immediately after He had called Matthew to leave the counting-table and follow Him, "a certain ruler came up and adored Him saying 'Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come, and lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live' . . . And when Jesus was come in the house . . . and when the multitude was put forth, He went in and took her by the hand. And the maid arose." The beautiful young maid just budding into girlhood He gave back alive to the desolate and heart-broken father, and the shadow was banished from that sad home. But the daughter of Jairus was also to see death again. It may have been only in after years, when her form was bent and the bloom had died upon her cheeks, when her step was feeble and tottering, that she was laid away in her grave, but certain it is that death again laid his cold hand upon her and stole her life away.

Once more we read that, shortly before His Passion, Martha and Mary sent Him word beyond the Jordan: "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." When He reached the eastern slope of Olivet, where Bethany nestled, Lazarus had been four days in the

tomb. Standing before that marble slab behind which His friend was cold in death, "He cried with a loud voice: 'Lazarus, come forth.' And presently he that had been dead came forth." But the life which had been requickened in that dead body was to die again, like the flame of a candle which has been relit. Lazarus was again, when the days of his life were done and the shadows had gathered, to pass into the darkness of his grave. Not so, however, with our risen Lord, for "Christ rising from the dead dieth no more. Death shall no more have dominion over Him." In His glorious quickening into new life sin has lost its victory, death its sting. He shall see the tomb no more, taste death never again, but shall live in joy unspeakable with the Father forevermore. Thus, too, He is the type of our spiritual renewing, our resurrection of the spirit. With this motive we rise to a new and a higher spiritual life, of which neither the raising of the widow's son, nor of the daughter of Jairus, nor the resurrection of Lazarus, is the type. We rise to die no more. The old passions and inclinations shall no more have dominion over us. Their victory is gone, their sting lost. We shall live the new life with our risen Lord before our eyes, and thus we shall meet Him face to face on the great Easter Morn in the Kingdom of His Father.

Here may be recited Psalm 3.

MOUNT OLIVET

God is ascended with jubilee; and the Lord with the sound of trumpet. **Ps. 46:6.**

ABOUT the Mount of Olives our thoughts are to linger during this Holy Hour. The music of the breezes through the branches of the trees upon the lawn is a sweet harmony of praise, as it floats in through the open windows of His earthly home. He had often heard it when a boy among the groves on Nazareth's hills. Did it remind Him of the murmuring and whispering of the olive and the fig trees as He spent the night alone on the mountain-top "in the prayer of God"? The birds with their sweet songs may go to southern lands, but their harmonies in His honor are replaced by the chant of the winds which sweep up from the river valley below. The leaves, crisp and dry, brown, red, and golden, dancing on the church porch remind one of the beautiful Spanish custom, when the children in their variegated costumes dance with joy and reverence before the Blessed Sacrament. How beautiful the autumn leaves in their gorgeous colors! How happy, too! Yet they are dying, as if joyfully for Him who died for us.

The autumn is young when the Holy Angels come with their feast to lift our sober thoughts to higher things. Yet how busy those bright spirits shall be with souls of men before their month has waned. One of the princes of that heavenly army—of which twelve legions were ready to do our Master's bidding—was with Him at the foot of the mountain which He loved. Twelve legions at His command on the night He sorrowed unto death and feared unto blood-shedding, and yet only one came, not to draw his sword in His defence, but to whisper heaven-sent messages of comfort. How many of the angelic host linger night and day about His Tabernacle in loving adoration! Perhaps during the Holy Hour there are "ten hundred times ten thousand" bearing Him soothing words of comfort from countless soldiers of His Sacred Heart. How those blessed spirits love to linger here! What joy to them when we, entering unto His Presence, kneel beneath the flickering sanctuary light, which like His love never dies, and join them in worship and thanksgiving!

He must have loved Olivet the more because of the angel's visit. After Calvary and the supper-chamber in Jerusalem there was no place dearer to His Sacred Heart. We shall never know, till He tells us when we meet Him in His kingdom, how many nights He spent on its slopes in prayer. Because it was His wont to tarry under the olive trees in Gethsemani, Judas, who came out "with a mul-

titude with swords and clubs and lanterns and torches" was sure of finding Him. When at the first Passover of His public life He went down through Samaria from Galilee and cleansed the Temple, did He, as night came on, go out to the mountain that He loved? Perhaps it was in its quiet solitude that He sat late into the darkness with the timid Nicodemus. Surely many a time He must have lingered within sound of the waters of Cedron, and have taught His Apostles the truths of the kingdom.

But we need not draw on our fancy. There are facts which convince us of His love for Olivet. That holy hill has been rendered sacred by the warm tears from His eyes on Palm Sunday. The night before had been spent peacefully on the eastern slope with Lazarus and his sisters. How He loved to linger with those holy ones! Yet not with half the love wherewith He yearns to dwell with us. What are all the marvels of the mount of the altar, but loving strategies that He may win our souls and abide with us? Is He not our Emmanuel—our God with us? There is no other nation whose God is so nigh unto it as our God is nigh unto us. On Palm Sunday He ascended to the summit from Bethany. At the foot of the western slope lies Gethsemani, and beyond run the waters of the Cedron, tinged red with the blood from the Temple offerings. Standing out boldly on Mount Moriah, glistening in the early sun-

light, are the roofs, pinnacles and spires of the Temple. He can see the narrow streets densely thronged with worshippers hurrying along and over the Tyropœon valley to the morning sacrifices. The white tents, in which are encamped the Galileans and the pilgrims from the up-country, are pitched along the sides of the hills.

"And when He drew near, seeing the city, He wept over it saying: 'If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace: but now they are hidden from thy eyes.'" He wept over Jerusalem—the Holy City; the city of which Melchisedech had been king and priest of the Most High God, over which David and Solomon had ruled, in which the Ark of the Covenant had rested; the city in which the holy Temple was built and at the thought of which the Jews, sitting in exile by the waters of Babylon, wept when its memories crowded in upon their minds. At the sight of this city our Blessed Saviour shed tears. But what tears must He not shed over those other cities, those other temples, the souls of men, living temples, anointed and consecrated by the shedding of His Blood! Poor souls of men! If we only knew the things which are for our peace; but these things are hidden from our eyes. We are blind, not of body, that were a slight misfortune, but of spirit. Yet it is at the mount of the altar that we must strengthen our spiritual vision. Of the Disciples going

to Emmaus with the Master at their side it is said: "But their eyes were held that they should not know Him." When, however, He had tarried with them at the inn and after He had broken bread with them, they came back to Jerusalem and "they told what things were done in the way and how they knew Him in the breaking of the bread." Oh, how He yearns to flash the light into our darkened spirits at the breaking of the Bread! Yet we stay away.

The tears shed on Palm Sunday have dried. The Hosannas of the multitude and the children have been long silent; the waving of the palms and olive branches has ceased. Forty days have lived and died since He died and lives again who is to die no more. When He was to pass from earth to Heaven, from time to eternity, when He was to tell a loving farewell to His Blessed Mother and pass to the Father, the last spot which would be hallowed by His sacred feet would be the summit of Olivet. There it was that He gathered them and "lifting up His hands He blessed them. And it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, that He departed from them. While they looked on, He was raised up and carried into heaven. And sitteth on the right hand of God." There, then, on the Mount of Olives, so often the scene of His "prayer of God," of His tears and His triumphs, of His sorrow and sadness unto a death of blood, there He was to speak words of melting love

to His Apostles for the last time. There on that Mount, within sight of Bethania, where He had often tarried with Mary and Martha, where He had raised Lazarus from death to life, where He had dined with the grateful Simon, He was to look for the last time into His Mother's eyes and tell her good-by till she should see Him in His Father's house. There for the last time on earth He would raise those hands, which had been pierced, over those who had been faithful and true to Him, those hands which by their touch had given sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf; those hands which had given the loaves that fed the multitude and which had rested in benediction on the heads of the little children who thronged about on the shores of the lake and in the narrow streets of Jerusalem. Those hands would be lifted for the last time on Mount Olivet to bless His Mother and His faithful Apostles. Can we wonder, then, that He loved those holy heights?

Though He departed that day into Heaven, though He was never more to be seen by mortal eye, yet He has ever fondly tarried with us on the mount of the altar in His Tabernacle-home. There, too, His nail-dug hands are ever raised to bless us with the same love of His wounded Heart, even as He blessed His Mother and Apostles on Olivet's heights in Judea so long ago.

Here may be recited Psalm 46.

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